

Winter 2020

Santa Clara Review, vol. 107, no. 1

Santa Clara University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/sc_review



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Santa Clara University, "Santa Clara Review, vol. 107, no. 1" (2020). *Santa Clara Review*. 22.
https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/sc_review/22

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the SCU Publications at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Santa Clara Review by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact rscroggin@scu.edu.

SANTA CLARA

REVIEW

volume 107 / issue 01
Featuring Huda Al-Marashi,
Tongo Eisen-Martin &
Vladimir Kush



volume 107 / issue 01

COVER ART BY **ALEXANDRA STROKINA**

FRONT COVER / *UNTITLED*

WATERCOLOR

SANTA CLARA REVIEW IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR UNSOLICITED SUBMISSIONS OF ARTWORK. TO FACILITATE ACCURATE REPRODUCTION OF YOUR PIECE, WE WELCOME SUBMISSIONS ONLINE VIA OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.SANTACLARAREVIEW.COM

SUBSCRIPTION TO PRINT COPIES ARE \$15.00 FOR ONE YEAR AND \$25.00 FOR TWO YEARS. SINGLE AND BACK ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE FOR \$7.50 (INCLUDES \$1.00 FOR POSTAGE AND HANDLING).

CONTACT US BY MAIL AT:

SANTA CLARA REVIEW

500 EL CAMINO REAL, Box 3212

SANTA CLARA, CA, 95053-3212

(408) 554-4484

OR EMAIL AT:

SANTACLARAREVIEW@GMAIL.COM

NO MANUSCRIPTS OR ARTWORK CAN BE RETURNED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE. MANUSCRIPTS UNDER CONSIDERATION WILL BE KEPT FOR AT LEAST FOUR WEEKS. MATERIALS PUBLISHED IN SANTA CLARA REVIEW MAY NOT BE REPRINTED, IN WHOLE OR PART, WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE EDITORS OR ORIGINATORS.

THANK YOU TO KIRK GLASER, TEDD VANADILOK, MATT CAMERON, AND ARCELIA RODRIGUEZ FOR THEIR CONTINUED ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT.

SANTA CLARA REVIEW ACCEPTS GIFTS AND DONATIONS TO HELP COVER PRODUCTION COSTS. PLEASE WRITE OR CALL WITH QUERIES.

SANTA CLARA REVIEW

VOLUME 107 / ISSUE 01

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ALLY O'CONNOR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

MADDIE SYKES

PRODUCTION EDITOR

MADLINE GOLLIVER

POETRY EDITOR

ERIKA RASMUSSEN

ART EDITOR

RHIANNON JANESCHILD

NONFICTION EDITOR

DHANUSH SHETTY

FICTION EDITOR

DANNA D'ESOP

WEBMASTER

KISH RAI

OWL EDITOR

ANNIE LOEWEN

MARKETING DIRECTOR

JULIANNE XENAKIS

FACULTY ADVISOR

KIRK GLASER

ASSISTANT EDITORS

POETRY

MARIA ORLANDI

KELLAN WEINBERGER

KATIE MCCORMICK

ZHI-YING CHUA

MOLLY WORFORD

JANHVI GIDHA

NONFICTION

ANOUSHKA GUPTA

ALEX WEISKOPF

EMMA KULI

SHENIR DENNIS

THE OWL

ALEXA ALFANO

ELLIE FENG

SARAH LACKEY

FICTION

MEGHAN MALONE

TARA TEDJARATI

KATYA TRUSHCHANKOVA

WILL KOLADA

MARKETING

THOMAS FORD

CHLOE SCHECHTER

EDITORIAL BOARD

SAMUEL ANDERSON

MARIALISA CARUSO

TERESA CONTINO

BEN ROOCK

MIYA DRISCOLL

WALKER JONES

EMMA LIGTENBERG

ELENA MADDY

TIMOTHY TROGLIA JR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN / A GOOD EARTH
07

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN / CLOCKED IN STILL STARVING
11

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN / APOLOGIES, LORD
12

ADRIANA STIMOLA / NIGHT FRUIT
18

ARNO BOHLMMEIJER / NO BLOCK
19

DAVID SAPP / COMMITTEE BUSINESS
20

GABRIEL PALACIOS / EAST SIDE
21

GABRIEL PALACIOS / MOVIES SHOULD BE THIS
22

MELA BLUST / ALL THE TREES HAVE LOST THEIR LIMBS
23

MADRONNA HOLDEN / SHAPESHIFTING HOME
24

MADRONNA HOLDEN / DESERT WOMAN
26

MADRONNA HOLDEN / COLORS OF BELONGING
28

SYLVIA JONES / FAST BACKWARDS
29

SYLVIA JONES / OF TWO MINDS
30

TAYLOR SCHAEFER / WHAT GETS IN
31

AERIK FRANCIS / _STASIS: LAGGING_
34

AERIK FRANCIS / _DIGITAL FOOTPRINT_
37

ANDRE SYKES / BLACK OUT
38

ANNIE MA / MILK
39

BONNIE SMITH / CONVERSATIONS WITH NO ONE
40

BONNIE SMITH / WHY I'M CAUTIOUS
42

MATTHEW SPIRENG / YES
43

MELISSA BALLETE / A HYMN FOR MY MOST BELOVED
46

SHAWN ANTO / ANIMALIA
48

ISAAC YELDER / I DON'T WANNA DIE 2NITE
49

LISA COMPO / (BIPOLAR AND) KILLING YOUR KIDNEYS,
50

LISA COMPO / ODE TO DESERT WASHES
51

CHLOE SCHEUCH / BEAUTIFUL BOY
52

CHLOE SCHEUCH / PAPA DIED SMILING
55

CHLOE SCHEUCH / I HOPE THIS EMAIL FINDS YOU WELL
57

TONY GRUENEWALD / PUNCTUATION
59

SARAH JAMES / AN UNFINISHED DEFINITION OF MY BODY
60

KELCI BAUGHMAN MCDOWELL / MY FAMILIAR FACE THAT WANTS TO DIE WITH
LIFE
66

KELCI BAUGHMAN MCDOWELL / SUN DISC AND ITS PRODIGY

67

KELCI BAUGHMAN MCDOWELL / THE YEAR WITHOUT A SUMMER

68

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS / CARCINOGEN

78

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS / ON THIS NIGHT, OR ANY OTHER

80

NEFERTITI ASANTI / GIFTS

82

IRA ROSENSTEIN / NOBODY SEES MY HORNS—A DREAM

90

ZEBULON HUSET / FOR PET ABANDONMENT

103

FICTION

JENNA GLOVER / DEATH AND CECIL COPPERPOT

69

KYLA YAMASHITA / ALL HERE

92

NONFICTION

HUDA AL-MARASHI / MOMENTS OF ARRIVAL

2

ERICA TRABOLD / RITUAL

32

HARRISON PYROS / PURELY ANECDOTAL

102

ART

VLADIMIR KUSH / ABOVE THE SEA LEVEL

14

VLADIMIR KUSH / CATERPILLAR BRIDGE

15

VLADIMIR KUSH / INFINITY TRAIL

16

VLADIMIR KUSH / ARRIVAL OF THE FLOWER SHIP

17

STINA ARSTORP / BEDROOM STILL LIFE

44

STINA ARSTORP / BEDROOM STILL LIFE

45

ALEXANDRA STROKINA / UNTITLED

62

ALEXANDRA STROKINA / UNTITLED

63

STEVE BRISCOE / FLEA MARKET PHOTOGRAPHS

64

STEVE BRISCOE / FLEA MARKET PHOTOGRAPHS

65

NICHOLE SPENCER / A SAFE PLACE TO CRY

81

CATHERINE SKINNER / REITERATION XV - RIVULETS

100

CATHERINE SKINNER / REMNANTS VI - ACCUMULATION SERIES

101

EDITOR'S NOTE

ALLY O'CONNOR

volume 107 / issue 01

DEAR READER,

It is my honor to share this copy of Volume 107, Issue 1 of the *Santa Clara Review* with you. Please believe me when I say, there is magic in these pages.

For 150 years, the *Santa Clara Review* has published poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and art thanks to the tireless work of enthusiastic Santa Clara University undergraduates. Without the efforts of each and every person involved, this organization would not function as it does. I could not be more grateful for the commitment of our Leadership Staff, Assistants and Associates, Editorial Board, and Faculty Advisor. This book is truly a collaborative project.

I was fortunate to discover the *Santa Clara Review* during my first year at Santa Clara University and was humbled to find myself the Fiction Editor in my sophomore year. My two years as Fiction Editor taught me boundless lessons about the literary world and opened my eyes to my own strengths and abilities. As I serve my final year on our Leadership Staff as Editor-in-Chief, I feel so thankful that life helped me to connect with this organization. It has been with me through all of the vicissitudes of my college experience and helped me to grow.

This year, we are excited to share with you literary and artistic contributions from a wide variety of gifted authors, artists, and poets. We first and foremost thank these contributors for their talents and vulnerability. The *Santa Clara Review* is honored to provide a space for the work of those of all backgrounds and strongly believes that the arts are a strong means for connection, emotion, and healing. Moreover, we extend a special thanks to our three featured contributors, Huda Al-Marashi, Tongo Eisen-Martin, and Vladimir Kush.

In addition to our wonderful contributors, none of this would be possible without the skills and hard work of our over 35 student staff members, most specifically our 2019 - 2020 Leadership Staff: Maddie S., Jules, Kish, Maddie G., Danna, Dhanush, Erika, Rhiannon, and Annie. I am so fortunate to work by your side and have learned so much from you during our journey.

To our Faculty Advisor, Dr. Kirk Glaser, thank you for believing in me and supporting me from the day I arrived at the *Santa Clara Review* and for sharing with all of us your wisdom, creativity, and great sense of humor. Thank you for mentoring not only this year's staff, but also those who have come before us for the past decade. Your connection to this magazine is incredible, and the intangible gifts you share with students last a lifetime.

For all of those who have supported the *Santa Clara Review* throughout its lengthy tenure, we are filled with gratitude for your kindness, and for those who have just opened your first copy of the Santa Clara Review, thank you for letting us share with you.

Happy reading,

ALLY O'CONNOR
editor in chief

HUDA AL-MARASHI

featured author

Huda Al-Marashi is the Iraqi-American author of *First Comes Marriage: My Not-So-Typical American Love Story*, a book the *Washington Post* called “a charming, funny, heartbreaking memoir of faith, family, and the journey to love. If Jane Austen had grown up as a first-gen daughter of Iraqi parents in the 1990s, she might have written this.”

Excerpts from this memoir have also been anthologized in *Love Inshallah: The Secret Love Lives of Muslim American Women*, *Becoming: What Makes a Woman*, and *Beyond Belief: The Secret Lives of Women and Extreme Religion*.

Her other writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *LA Times*, *Al Jazeera*, *VIDA Review*, the *Rumpus*, the *Offing* and elsewhere. She is the recipient of a Cuyahoga County Creative Workforce Fellowship and an Aspen Summer Words Emerging Writer Fellowship. *First Comes Marriage* was longlisted for the Chautauqua Prize and a finalist for the Southern California Independent Booksellers’ Award.

Huda currently resides in California with her husband and three children.

MOMENTS OF ARRIVAL

I stood in front of a dining room table filled from edge to edge with rice and stews that smelled of saffron, cardamom, and home. Only a few days prior, I'd met Neda at an on-campus Muslim Students Association meeting, and she was so thrilled to meet another Iraqi that she wasted no time inviting me to her parents' home for dinner.

To my surprise, Neda's mother, whom I referred to as *Khala*, the Arabic word for aunt, had made *dolma*. My mother only stuffed grape leaves when we had parties. I told her that she'd gone to too much trouble.

She said, "No, *habibti*. These are the things I make every night."

When I took a bite of Khala's *dolma*, I could tell this was a signature dish. Her perfectly seasoned, tightly-wrapped grape leaves and stuffed onions had all the marks of mastery.

"*Ashedeedkum*," I said, praising her hands and feeling proud and terribly mature. This was my first dinner with another Iraqi family where my parents were not present to carry on the conversation.

When native-born Iraqis meet each other, they talk about the cities they are from, the neighborhoods they lived in, the people they knew. Born and raised in the United States, I felt the absence of this dialogue keenly, and I tried to compensate with stories about my mother and father, my grandfather and how he'd come to live with us. And because I felt like these moments of arrival were a point of connection, I asked, "How did you come?"

"Political asylum," Neda's father answered.

"And then you came straight to California?"

"No, no," he continued. "We waited two years in Malaysia before we got the visa to come here."

I asked about Malaysia and learned that it was clean and beautiful and lovely enough that they might have stayed had it not been for Aysar's family. Aysar was Neda's cousin, a first-year student and an American-born Iraqi just like me. Neda had arranged for Aysar to give me a ride that evening. She sat at my side, listening to a conversation that had us both riveted.

Over the course of the evening, we heard how Neda and her family endured the Gulf War's food shortages, power outages, and all night bomb raids by huddling together with family and neighbors, drinking tea

and cracking watermelon seeds. Neda and her older sister, Yusra, made the sound of a rocket flying above and laughed, shaking their heads at the memory of the fear that had once gripped their lives.

In Iraq, Yusra and Neda had both been medical students, living in a city nearly two hours away from home. Yusra had been in her last year, Neda in her second. When they came to the United States, they were not able to transfer directly into another medical school. Yusra had been accepted as a junior at Santa Clara University, Neda a sophomore. Yusra had since graduated and was working in pharmaceuticals while she applied to medical schools. Neda was one quarter away from finishing up a major in biology.

It hurt Neda and Yusra to have to repeat so much of their education. I empathized with this, but what stood out most to me was that they'd lived in the dormitories when they were in medical school. I could not resist asking their mother, "You let you them go to school away from home?"

"Of course. They have to study," she said as she served me a generous second helping of rice. "They'd go during the week and come home on the weekends."

Scooping from the small mound of rice deposited onto my plate, I said, "My mom barely let me come to Santa Clara and live in the dorms. I told myself that I was lucky. If my family was still living in Iraq, I wouldn't have been able to go away to school."

"No, Iraq has changed," Khala said. "You think these girls wore the hijab there? They put it on here."

I looked at Neda and Yusra for verification. Yusra said, "We saw all these girls in the MSA wearing it, and we felt ashamed. All these American girls wearing the hijab before us. We thought it was good to do it with them."

"I don't like it," said Khala, who I realized must not wear the hijab, like me and so many of the women in my community. "Now is not the time. They need to study and find jobs. Who will hire them wearing this?"

I helped myself to another serving of dolma and tried to make sense of what I was hearing. "It's funny," I said, slicing into a shiny grape leaf with my fork. "I've gotten such a different impression of Iraq from the families we know here. I grew up being told that a girl doesn't leave her family until she gets married and that a girl doesn't talk to boys. And if she does any of those things, people will talk about her, and if people talk about her, then nobody will want to marry her."

Neda's family's laughter bore the mark of recognition. Khala said,

“*Mashallah*, I’m surprised to see you understand so much. I didn’t expect this from somebody who grew up here.”

I noted that Aysar did not comment. I took in her sleeveless top, the kind of attire I had been told was off-limits even if I did not cover my hair, and wondered if she had not heard the same admonitions growing up, if she’d been allowed freedoms in high school that my parents had forbidden.

“My mom was really clear on the things we were not allowed to do,” I added.

Neda reached for an extra spoon of *qeema*, a tomato-based lentil stew. “Even in Iraq, we don’t think like that anymore. Boys and girls, we go to school together. We study together. We go out. Of course, we don’t have ‘boyfriends’ but we have friends.”

Now it was my turn to laugh. “I think you had more freedom than I did. I went to an all-girls high school. I don’t think I’ve ever studied with a boy, and I’ve never gone out with boys, even in a group.”

“Your mother did a good job with you then,” Khala said before urging me to take more food. I speared another *dolma* with my fork even though I felt as if my slacks were strangling my waist.

My stomach was full, but all of a sudden my head felt so empty. There were so many more things I needed to know, things that I was not bold enough to ask. I wondered if Neda and Yusra were fielding marriage proposals. They were in their early twenties, and my entire life, I’d been warned of the volatility of our community’s marriage market, that girls who were not married by thirty were treated as if they’d expired.

I wondered what Neda and Yusra would think if they knew that my mother had been preparing me for marriage since puberty and that I was soon to be engaged to the son of our closest family friends, a boy who had a crush on me since we were children and who planned to ask my family for my hand in marriage.

By Thanksgiving, Neda and her family were already integrated into our close circle of friends. At dinner that night, when everyone had gathered around the table to serve themselves buffet-style, my future father-in-law called for everyone’s attention and announced that he’d asked my father for my hand in marriage earlier that afternoon and that, with my father’s blessing, I had accepted.

Neda's family was congratulatory, as were the rest of our visitors. My engagement was unexpected but not unusual for a girl of my age in our community. I smiled all through the night, still months away from the fear and doubt that would chase me throughout my engagement, still years away from asking myself why I had made such a serious commitment so early on in life. Was it my religion? My culture? Me?

With my wedding date still undetermined, Neda, Yusra, Aysar and I resumed our friendship as if I were not engaged to be married. Aysar kept giving me rides to Khala's house for our weekly dinner. Neda bought me a brand new notebook from the campus bookstore and tutored me in Arabic. The following year, when Neda had graduated and taken her first job, Aysar and I roomed together for nine months that stitched us together for life.

Our friendship was the first to blur the simplistic binaries that cluttered my eighteen-year-old mind. My entire childhood, I had distinguished between those born abroad and those born here. Those who assimilated too much and those who did not assimilate enough. Those who "lost" their religion upon coming to the United States, giving up their prayers, their fasts, their abstinence from alcohol, and those who resisted the pull of, a problematic term I used far too liberally, Americanization.

At the time, I was so caught up in challenging the dominant culture's stereotypes—the trope of the oppressed Arab woman, the domineering Arab man, the religion of Islam as inherently violent—that I'd never stopped to consider the stereotypes I, too, held of my own, the ways in which my understanding of my culture and my community lacked nuance or complexity. Growing up, there were so many losses that were obvious to me, our language, religion, food, and culture. However, this was a loss I'd never imagined, the opportunity to see yourself within an entire population rather than a single immigrant community.

It was precisely the absence of this wider population that made my friendship with Neda, Yusra, and Aysar so precious. When time and distance allow us to gather, our parents, spouses, and children in tow, we often retell the story of our first meeting, each one of us adding on our own unique memories of the moment we met. We comment on the clothes we wore, our hairstyles, our naïve conservatism, how clueless we were to our youth. Our reminiscing always carries us to the same grateful conclusion. How lucky we were to have found each other.

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN

featured poet

Tongo Eisen-Martin was born in San Francisco and earned his MA at Columbia University. He is the author of *someone's dead already* (Bootstrap Press, 2015), nominated for a California Book Award; and *Heaven Is All Goodbyes* (City Lights, 2017), which received a 2018 American Book Award, a 2018 California Book Award, was named a 2018 National California Booksellers Association Poetry Book of the Year, and was shortlisted for the 2018 Griffin International Poetry Prize. In their citation, the judges for the Griffin Prize wrote that Eisen-Martin's work "moves between trenchant political critique and dreamlike association, demonstrating how, in the right hands, one mode might energize the other—keeping alternative orders of meaning alive in the face of radical injustice.... His poems are places where discourses and vernaculars collide and recombine into new configurations capable of expressing outrage and sorrow and love."

Eisen-Martin is also an educator and organizer whose work centers on issues of mass incarceration, extrajudicial killings of Black people, and human rights. He has taught at detention centers around the country and at the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University. He lives in San Francisco.

A GOOD EARTH

I talk facing away from the dead
They replace me with the change in my pocket
A penny that has yet to be invented

You have to know how to cut a throat on the way to cutting a throat

After sleeping on a mattress made from two garbage bags of clothes
I became content with the small gestures of plantation fires
Playing with couch ashes, I realized how weird the universe was. It exists in
so many places. So many
random things. It interrupts me when I am trying to dream. Like
your clay
correspondence, Lord

To be transparent
I have twenty books next to a bullet
Like an old man giving advice at the beginning of a revolution

I've really done it, Lord. Explored the mumbles of my mind. Explored
what's naturally there. And I found no brainwashing. I found Africa, Lord.

I have a future
It takes place in the diasporic South
I have morning possessions
Modern militancy
I mean windows to the South
I will walk on a missile for food

I guess you will not want flowers for a few years, Lord

Will I be tied face to face with the country I murder

Merge with us, Lord

our old metal vs. the new metal
our old metal vs. a pool of meandering imperialist faces

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN

A multiculturalism of sorts

The dead replace me with a comedian's chest cavity
Instead of a chest cavity held tight

It takes a violent middle man for me to talk to myself
Stories that travel through other people's stories
A song about a song
A hemisphere about a hemisphere
Stories that travel through a conquered poet

My mother remembers Africa, Lord
She killed on behalf of you, Lord

I wore a machete all winter and no one asked me what it meant
I read one thousand books in front of the world

What I do is fight poems

And sleep through decadent San Francisco prayer circles

Watch people play for post-working class associative surfaces
Or Recreations of a governor's desk

ruling class art of utility
Playing find the sociopathic bureaucrat

A day white people scare even easier
TV in a basket next to a ceramic baby
Wearing ceramic armor
Musket progeny fantasizing through the art of the poor
Their trendy latches locked before God
Black art hunted down like a dog

Hand over my friends, Lord

Lord, I think that I am going to die in a war

Unelected white people in my small house
Like a blues song of no spiritual affect
or dollhouse H-bomb
A pony show near dead bodies
Apartheid weddings that go right
Apartheid white people who give birth to mathematicians
The spiritual continuity of barracks and police stations
The chemical interpretation of a Sunday trip to church
Church smells in their pockets
A river mistaken for a talking river
No autobiography outside of small personal victories of violence and drug
use

Made in the image of God's trinkets
What white abolitionists confided in their children about
Chemical assurances that
They will switch from Black artist to white artist
Black God to white God
Black worker to white worker

I think about you cautiously, Lord
In the same way I think about my childhood, Lord

Foxhole Friday nights
Most of life is mute

Comedian points out the planter's field to the priest

King sugar cane
King cotton
King revolutionary

The bottle is central
Containing all modes of shallow introduction
Introducing an unlisted planter class
Speaking about fever and balance sheets
And reassuring the masses
That we can figure out our fathers later

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN

A priest took my mother lightly, Lord
Stood in front of the parishioners re-raveling
Fantasies about Black art
Priest reading confidently
Before I broke him
And broke his parallel

After today, I have never been a poet before

A little brother watches his big brother's friends
They lean rifles on shelter walls
They agree with me and call it literature

It's a simple matter this revolution thing
To really lie to no one
To keep nothing godlike
To write a poem for God

CLOCKED IN STILL STARVING

My money being
 The nonviolent part of rage
 A kind of courtesy worship
 Or caste-system blues

Bullet casings in the comb
I learned their language immediately
I watched an animal explode into hundreds of flags

Judging by my wounds
The government has counted me in

Face to face
With a police officer's family history
 My anecdote is only just beginning

APOLOGIES, LORD

English is a lukewarm relationship with your people

With practice, I met every white person in the world

The state's pastel gibberish and
The sum of all corporate defense mechanisms

Retail awards and standard issue bullets left on a plate outside my door

Nightstick,
I know no other colors today

Plate design inspired by the gold trim around mother Africa
-A congressional motif

Night stick,
The next person out the door means america no harm

The hospital bed shakes
Now I am a white man's son

VLADIMIR KUSH

featured artist

Kush predominantly works in the medium of oil painting on canvas or board, with many of the original paintings also sold as limited edition giclée-on-canvas prints. His bronze-colored sculptures are small-scale and usually based on imagery from his paintings, such as *Walnut of Eden* and *Pros and Cons*. Although his style is frequently described as surrealist, Kush himself refers to it as “metaphorical realism” and cites the early influence on his style of Salvador Dalí’s surrealist paintings as well as landscapes by the German romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. Another influence on his work has been the 16th century Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, known for his fantastic imagery and sometimes characterised as “the pre-Surrealism Surrealist.” Wings, ships, and color-saturated seascapes are frequent themes in his paintings, exemplified in the companion pieces, *Arrival of the Flower Ship* and *Departure of the Winged Ship*. Flowing water is another recurrent theme, exemplified by *Breach* and *Current*. Other works such as *Three Graces* and *African Sonata* merge human and animal forms with inanimate objects.



ABOVE THE SEA LEVEL

VLADIMIR KUSH

oil paint



CATERPILLAR BRIDGE

VLADIMIR KUSH

oil paint



INFINITY TRAIL

VLADIMIR KUSH

oil paint



ARRIVAL OF THE FLOWER SHIP

VLADIMIR KUSH

oil paint

ADRIANA STIMOLA
poetry

NIGHT FRUIT

It ends with oranges, as
I work my way up,
inside, rise to
this closed-eye occasion.
This citrus coronation.
The cotton softly covering
the places you pry and I leak.
The wings are all set, ripe
and beating so fast, I fall
to the foot of the feet of
my tree. It starts
with oranges.

ARNO BOHLMEIJER
poetry

NO BLOCK

At an advanced age
a man stays in the sun,
despite gnats, caterpillars,
and code red for the ultraviolet.
He seems to fall asleep dead deep
or think: have a damn tan in the coffin.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

As in any other autumn
When the starlings convene
Pressing their rude agenda,
Noisily conferring over
Arabesque and murmuration,
Charting precise choreography
Across the sky, I clap my hands
Not in applause but in a furtive
Delight of power, disrupting
Crucial committee business
To watch them scatter,
To stifle their clamor.
However, this year,
Savvy to my intentions,
The flock doesn't give a whit
Ignores the crack of my palms,
Another small pleasure
Rendered useless.

EAST SIDE

I'm merely saving sermons from your shredder
So what
I was baptized
In the north
& I'll die in broad day
All your brothers left the east side
Teetering on cinderblocks
To cradle echoed clattering of skateboards, blotter paper images of Christ,
Dickies canvas belt your father
Laid one flayed back against
Another with,
In the weeping
Carport, wherever we were
Wired together in our sleep,
We understood his
Glazed-face feeling
He got robbed,
Face of feeling body
Lighting candles as the mind
Is trying on shoes
Floodwater loud into arroyo summer we called Chaca
& the Bastards from a pay phone
It was perfect
I didn't hang up the receiver
I let it dangle
& I said
This is war

MOVIES SHOULD BE THIS

Your voice
No science to debunk
That snarl unbodied in
The draft

I swung
The shutter down
Came riding to the channel you cut
In the wash

All movies should be this
No words no longer than 52
Seconds just cantilevered
Roof the gleaming counter
East to west
& when I run my hand under your skirt
Do I see skin

ALL THE TREES HAVE LOST THEIR LIMBS

you were the child who dared the moon
to drag your new body to the map of something real.
like the bones of the one-hundred-year wood where we played
as children
now the bones are our souls in a
new place, old feast
your eyes on our forested hearts.

how burdened we are with tradition
breathing in and out of the present
ideas you aren't supposed to think
are only sixteen once.
remember your wild, broken laugh
we said goodbye a hundred times before we ever said
hello new day same sun new morning
dew split the rays of light on the grass
fed absence of meaning in the chasm between
what we left in our yesterday
and the alarm you have come to rely on.

clock wings of amber turning
over the leaves;
the leave of absence you took when all was young and full of promise
i held a dust mote in a ray of sun in my hand
and when i closed my fingers i swear to god there was nothing
to fear
but my hands are empty now like the bank account you pray to and
at the five-o'clock whistle you drop to your knees
like a soldier lined up to witness
the shocks of a pornographic sadness,

i swore i'd never beg but god is a hungry mouth
and we are all going to be swallowed
whole.

MADRONNA HOLDEN
poetry

SHAPESHIFTING HOME

It's all downhill from here
along the stairway
of light in the trees
where the Lady of the Woods
twists your years
back on themselves—
blooming your vision
into a kaleidoscope
of reflections.



If you are called
by an unfamiliar name
in this shapeshifter's garden
go ahead and answer—
allow yourself to be so sweetly
consumed by wildflowers
you re-emerge speaking
in the language of a
river or a tree.



DAVID WOLFERSBERGER
watercolor

MADRONNA HOLDEN
poetry

DESERT WOMAN

Your quick-witted brush has undressed
the desert to that pink blush below her tan—
only a few green things remain
breathing hard.

It is not that Desert Woman
is hiding anything:
she will entertain your
longed-for lucid dreams



while her daughters
take advice from cactus
on defending their
tender insides

discern from desert thunderstorms
how to partner with the rain
sure of their every wet word—
unafraid of the ensuing flood.



sat. 6 aug
30 mi. from yellowstone
n. fork Shoshone river

DAVID WOLFERSBERGER
watercolor

MADRONNA HOLDEN
poetry

COLORS OF BELONGING

There is color here
caramel sweet

green wild
as the river
steeping in the wind

in its amphitheater of water

castle of cliff

under blue musings of sky

everything fitted together
so we may love it
all at once.



DAVID WOLFERSBERGER
watercolor

SYLVIA JONES

poetry

FAST BACKWARDS

After Toi Derricotte & Charles Simic

isms aside conjuring
Derricotte, *I see my father after his death*
in Baltimore covered in soot shopping

for groceries at the 24 hour Giant, then again hurtling
through the dark, outside a Bronx ale house punching
the air behind me citing

Simic, *the blood-curdling shriek of my mother audible*
what registers first is this kinda subsonic rumble, following
a glance, yet there he is slouched as a french horn sitting

on a nocturnal pew giving
away golden parachutes, pacing
in continuous circles, quicker than a soft boiled egg peeling

its own shell: thin as an antenna bending
into a medusa curl, reneging
on tomorrow, seeing him feels like naysaying

down an engine of hilarious grief
all those fat rodents sounding
violently like tires, oozing
into a rottweiler

OF TWO MINDS

soft powered, I—
half shuttered, half bright
astrally projecting, subpoenaed
midair, feet up walking pink
clouds on the water's edge
shiny limbs in reflection, alabaster
human tears, refereeing
wraths greased logic

half shuttered, half bright
soft powered, I—
alien colored beneath
nights awning, subjective
as dead armadillos
under goliath sized power grids

soft powered, I—
half shuttered, half bright
in manufactured shade, keen
on splendor, live
in the decoy shadow
of a much larger tree
undimmed perennially

half shut, half bright
soft powered, I—
wholly uncool, chase
ransom captive evergreens
sullen mouth shaped things
childish as elbows
eating marzipan

half shuttered, half bright

WHAT GETS IN

Morning sparks among torn-up grass and sour
chalk dust printed on my prints. Loving the card corners played across

skinny laps, dappled in ochre-filtered
sun. Fourteen is like trying on jeans

between the aisles of a thrift store without dressing
rooms, some of them still new enough to stain
palms like a pen or the bruise I found

blooming under your eye-
lashes before the fraying.

RITUAL

I'm tired of my mother making me feel afraid; of the earthquake I must have felt last night, of the quality of my air. Her anxieties have been mine all week. Everyone else in this coastal lodge must think I'm a ghost. Since taking up residence on the red peak's top floor, I've rarely left it. I haunt the east-facing window, my profile visible only from the south. And tonight, I've covered my face in a mask, wrapped it white with the smell of some childhood memory I can't quite place. I've drawn the shades and lit the incense. I don't want anyone to see me, to frighten the woman on the gravel drive stretching both arms overhead, the old dog lying on the worn out rug. I'm sure everything I'm wearing was made in some far factory of the world. There is little I can do about some things.

I am performing a ritual, which is to say I fear my life isn't what it used to be. Last night, the same angry pain in my neck crept up and over my shoulder, even under a pile of white blankets. I slept rigidly. Through the witching hour, I dreamed of two women gripping each other by the collar bones in the kitchen. They crouched inward, making an arch of their arms, each pressing her thumbnails into the other's soft pectorals. Then, they howled. I am not sure how she did it, but one of the women triumphed and one of the women died and one of the women bared her white teeth.

I willed myself awake from that dream at three-thirty a.m. and remembered I had a body. The body was losing shape. The body was basted in sweat. And yet, at three-thirty a.m. I refused to remove my comforter, even the top sheet. I held the knot of blankets up to my chin and curled fetal.

Every day, I hope to wake fearless, and every night, I perform the ritual: float from one room to the next to blow out the candles, wiggle the stove knobs, pull at the locks, lock all the windows, close any stray cabinet doors. From the phonograph, I remove the last record I set spinning because a ghost might want to hear it in the night—*I do this just in case.*

I hope so hard that I dream.

ERICA TRABOLD

I dream so hard that I wake.

I wake to find myself inside a room I know, inside a mind I know, both a shade darker than I remember.

STASIS: LAGGING

//

i've had a flinch/ for a while sometimes i hear/ laughter/ within ear shot i
get a jealous rush/ i catch nervous laughs, too/ a question/ gurgles in my
belly/ urging to know/ if it is about me/ it seldom is/ not anymore/ no/

/

/

/

/

/

||:that was really funny/ when they saw you/ lagging:|| killed your
character/

/

/

/

/

/

it's a gl—itch/

iLag/ you lag/ IRL URL/ www.earelaggingno.www/ public/ policy is
made to lag the Supreme / Court is designed to lag behind/ the economy
is designed to lag / is a hardware problem/ perhaps/ you've felt this too/

/

/laugh

ing/ sometimes feels like lagging.net/

/

/

/

/

/

GOOD LAG?/

/

/

/

/

/

we've been hacked/ slashed/ ||:you should've known/ your system was
lagging:||/

/

AERIK FRANCIS

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

GOOD LAUGH?/

//

FunctioningI'mLagLagging
HardwareHardWorn
LinkingUnlinked
ErrorInMyLungLung
UnsupportedDevicesUnplug
PlugInMyVices
SoMyBrainCan't
TranslateMyTongue
/
TwitchStream
MeTwitchTwitching
SwitchSwiftly
MissesQuickened
MentalLimits
FicklePivots
PickedWith
StickyStingyDigits
SinnedAndForbidden
GivenForUnforgiven
It'sAGlitch/Glitch/Glitch
I'veAlreadyAdmittedIt
I'veHadAnItch/AFlinch
ForAWhile
/
/
/
/
/lagg

AERIK FRANCIS

ing/ sometimes feels like laughing.gif/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

/

||:GOODLAUGH?GOODLAG?GOODLAUGH? GOODLAG?

GOODLAUGH?GOODLAG?GOODLAUGH

?:||

//

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

i open the window, hurl everything out
into the portal void of space. precious

gems, early morning stimuli
to new news, grief

laden blunders all coded binary. i drag
bags to trash, walk away from explosive

words into rubble & puzzle piece debris.
all of my cadavers unearthed *am i afraid?*

undead only threaten to progress
a notion dependent

on a flattened former self, nostalgic ugly,
an unannotated fully redacted archive,

a utopia never to know,
a graveyard visitor vacant.

BLACK OUT

I've been swimming in
Black thoughts lately,
Some kind of Black
Parody where every melody
Sings in sinful Christian undertones.

These Black pools become sunken
Within honey brown irises that
Pray to Osiris for power and
Knowledge.

A Black body chalkboard
Tattooed by white propaganda—
A Black pixel in the middle
Your screen blurring the bodies—
A Black Bentley careening
Towards corners on sloping roads—
A Black face staring back at
Black face covered Black nappy
Crowns that have been usurped and stolen from
Black fields that no longer welcome
The Black face in the mirror.

Trapped Black thoughts in
A sea of a once proud Black
City now whitewashed in
Brush strokes that feel like
Whipped backs of the ancestors
That sacrificed blood and chains
For development and “progress.”

Black thoughts can make a
Black man not give a fuck
Anymore and just Black out.

MILK

earthly
ambrosia simmering with
a pearly mystery

Milk I drink to be
taller to reach the heavens

stronger to protect the earth

Calcium ichor
melts into my spine
and flows
throughout my bones and blood

I am God, and my roots
are laced
with Vitamin D

CONVERSATIONS WITH NO ONE

It's been mentioned that
a young woman,
such as myself,
Brilliant and bright,
should not throw her
life away on some

Quack

is the sound ducks
make to let you know
they do not give a

Fuck

is what I would say we
should go do instead
of sitting around here
listening to the

Dysfunction

of your
roommates, contributing and taking
in equal amounts from your life
can be an asset,
but too often friends and family
turn living into a

Debt

can be seen as an obstacle
but I have only ever seen
it as a road to

BONNIE SMITH

Faith

it has been mentioned,
may be my undoing.
But what if it is the catalyst of
my Brilliance, my Transformation?
Now I am no one.

WHY I'M CAUTIOUS

Why
would someone call me
a blood sucker
when I nibble on berries?
This cave was meant to
be an infinite
expression of being,
but children that were meant
to find home just
get lost here.
Why do some things work
in theory but in practice
corruption is something
to be counted on?
If I can fly in
the night you could
at least try
to share the wealth.
Let me enlighten you, you
will find a witch
if you are looking for one.
Her home will sweat sweet
like candy,
and the promise of
security echoes
off of the walls:
Yes, it is a cage.

YES

Is this Matthew Spireng?, the caller asks
and I instinctively respond, *Yes*,
because I am, and the caller hangs up

and now I am worried a recording of me
saying *Yes* will be used to gain access
to my accounts, but what can I do?

I don't know what to do and I think
to call a stranger I've heard of who might
know what to do, so I look up his number

and punch it into my phone and when
a man answers, I ask if he is so-and-so—
the name of the man I was calling—

and he says *Yes*, but I think better of
exposing my stupidity and asking his advice,
so I hang up without saying another word.



BEDROOM STILL LIFE

STINA ARSTORP

acrylic on canvas



BEDROOM STILL LIFE

STINA ARSTORP

acrylic on canvas

A HYMN FOR MY MOST BELOVED

*mater*¹ mother
we quiet the song of the blue
 though we are the melody
gray the golden sands
 slow poison in the tide
soon rises the ocean
 to collect our growing debt

flete!
 *fleo*²
mater mother
we starve the forest roots
 seek seeds for a future
cut down the palm trees
 and siege the seas of green
 set fire to what we can't have
 and take away the rest.

¹ mother

² weep! i weep

lugete!
*lugeo*³

mater mother
we are the wound and the salve
the persecutor
and the victim

*adiuvate!*⁴
*adiuvate eam!*⁵

pluck roses and carnations
drain the pufferfish from the sea
fratres, *sorores,*
strike down the heavens!
lay claim to the stars

³ mourn! i mourn

⁴ help!

⁵ help her!

⁶ brothers, sisters,

ANIMALIA

that's right, these thoughts are hungering, flesh un-tested, yearning
slowly
boiling, little-thought, would one get caught in their desires?

neon-pulse, on knees, drowning sorrow, fickle, drunken
lust-filled nectar, tendering between who I am and who I am not.

no, not like that, with your hand out, come clinging tenderly
toward brown-skin unsure of itself, unsure of what holiness truly means.

no, not like that, stay for real, a reminder thick with sticky sentiment
no one can pray hard enough when begging for seconds.

this flooding, waters filled with snakes, if she undresses, if he undresses
what mistakes are made, caught in a coconut tree, un-masking true
intention, what's sweet?

no, not like that, snarling demons crawling from open chest, practically
begging for a taste, but one cannot say enough.

come stoking fire, rapturous, flood, build a house
from what destroyed us all here, in our divinity, true-beast-in-form.

one can only swarm.

I DON'T WANNA DIE 2NITE

They say pussy and paper is poetry, power, and pistols
We already murdering each other so what's the issue
Pitiful niggas own pistols and got some power
Making my survival a question of every hour
What's poetry but a device to keep me from all these vices
Evil motherfuckers on homeland, nah I ain't talking ISIS
The people in power only pay attention to paper
No concern about making my neighborhood safer
They wanna rid us of this land, they start making us sling rocks
Niggas gotta carry glocks, dodge opps, and duck cops
And a jury of my peers never peered into where I'm from
They don't know the stakes, they only know what I have done
Whole system set up against me somebody save me
Like a gun to my head without the safety, what if I die tonight

If tonight's the night I get in some shit
And I gotta use a pistol I kinda hope I miss
The word says thou shalt not kill but niggas is living ill
Slick bragging about reaching for the steel
Leave a man's brains on the pavement for a tiny piece of turf
Surely I'm in hell cause this can't be earth
I think I'd rather be in the hearse than putting a nigga in the dirt
My momma will be hurt but her baby ain't a killer
Just a statistic six feet under cause of the villains
That's why I'm watching my back, even in sunny CA
Always on the lookout tryna see another day
So I can write some poetry to tell you about how I'm feeling
They say poetry, power, and pistols leads to pussy and paper
I just want the power to make my living safer, I don't wanna die tonight

(BIPOLAR AND) KILLING YOUR KIDNEYS,

they say salt cures. A lithium-made-desert carves
itself a dry lake crusted, cracked clean. *Sucks up
whatever is wrong*. Exactly what you need, short-lived
bed of mineral, mined just for the brain, insect-less
slate, cold tile land for curing, crystalized. You

dangled your foot over the edge of the Grand Canyon, red desert
with life asking you to forget, *a trip for the boys was all it was*.

The house bugged and then *the bugs on the wall*, holidays
with dinner flung outside, *never perfect*, never you enough.

Whatever it was took your body back from the loud
right into a hot, so barren quiet. You didn't care
about the lowering pressure inside you drowning
out your closed-up basin full of swamp, full of filtration,
and there went the freshwater, that yellow-eyed alligator
look. Grass-bodied ground with tadpole hope, scarred
flesh pushing on— a lake ephemeral, all
alkaline and green-blue.

ODE TO DESERT WASHES

They sunk with pink fairy dusters and superstition
mallow, with goat heads and cracked glass. The washes

behind the backyard fence were filled with beer-can wishes
and tin-sized dreams, and didn't we used to whisper

about the man in the cement
tunnel under the bridge? He lived

with the *whoosh* of cars and he liked the dark.
No playground had such vastness— the stars

float from the fairy dusters, gentle
into our hair, we shake them, laughing,

and snatch the orange poppy litter
because there is just so much. My brother

kicks up the dirt, finding pennies
in the earth like worms. The man sometimes

whistles in the tunnel, and we think he's kinda lonely
with all that tune and spray paint, though

we never see him, I think, he belongs
to us, in a way. We dare each other

to stare into the dark of the tunnel,
do you see him? We start to

whistle along, leave
shiny blue trash and green pennies, and sometimes

sing so the echoes against cement make us
feel just as empty and full and beautiful as this.

BEAUTIFUL BOY

6 1/2.

Tiramisu and Bobby's face.
I just learned what that is
In between bites of Monday pasta.
Later twirl me around on tip-toes
Hints of my gangrene tu-tu
Polka dotted toddler tights just hiding.
Mustached papa sitting in the recliner.
I manage a scream "Marry me Bobby!"
Above the karaoke set a little louder now
"You got that smell, Bobby"
You're high. I'm young
Weed with a capital W
I don't know what that means.

10.

I shiver as we watch
Flashing red and blue lights
A beacon atop a lighthouse no ones likes.
We watch a man straddle papa
Pushing breaths into his chest
Breaking sternums like chip bags
"I'm so sorry" you apologize
Over and over again.
I don't cry.
Confusion forming in my fettered brows
Later in the hospital wrapped in warming blankets
And Nurses arms
I watch you take a small white pill.
I pretend not to look.
Momma waits with Tiramisu on the front porch.

13.

“Tiramisu-*me* Bobby”

Gnarled attitude foams in the back of my mouth
And falls off my tongue like spit in an argument.
You look at me from behind glazed eyes.
And pull out the knuckler.
Raising the joint of the middle finger
Like a teenage girl walking to her car
Key sticking out of fist.
Crashing to the floor.
I pretend not to cry, you’re drunk.

16.

D.A.R.E

The girl next to me moans in defiance
I picture you like her
Doodling graffiti letters on lightly washed jeans
Coloring the check mark on your worn-in Nikes
Paying no attention to the classroom instruction.
Smoking a blunt in the back of the gymnasium bathroom.
Mama made tiramisu for your birthday.

21.

Sweat weeping into the pores of a mattress
Tangle myself into a blanket
A blanket that swaddled a once 6 lb baby
Now meekly covering an adult body.
You call.
“Just checking in” I hear the slur
Before it bites me.
Isn’t it funny how prematurely you can
Die in someone else’s mind?
I walk to Katrinca’s down the street
Order a Tiramisu in silence.

27.

I begin to wonder if we look alike.
I remember you at this age but
I picture the wrinkles that had already formed around your eyes
How I wanted to be like you
And nothing like you at the same time.
Splattering icing on our upper lips
Looking back at each other across the table
With tiramisu mustaches.
Your tiny sister.
I like to think, in that memory you were
Still my Beautiful Boy

PAPA DIED SMILING

Papa died smiling, I slept through Christmas.
My head floats atop my shoulders
Like London weather that settles
Among the rooftops. I am young.
Younger than I should be.

I pour myself a bowl of Corn Flakes.
Watching as the milk splatters
Creating small white streaks on the porcelain bowl.
The Williams-Sonoma glass carafe
Waits for Papa to pour rich hot coffee
Into his favorite speckled grey mug. He doesn't.
We used to wait at the end of the driveway for the bus,
digging our heels into the pebbled earth
My backpack: the only thing keeping me on the ground.
Papas kisses tasted of black coffee
 No sweetener
 And aftershave.

I meet someone new.
I'm older now and he reminds me of Papa.
But I get stuck. Stuck on crown molding,
Crystal Chandeliers that hang seductively between coiled railings.
Transom windows, and velvet staircases.
"Peonies or Begonias?" His mother asks.
We're just off the High Street in London weather.
Although I've felt that way since I was young.

I raise each tie up to the man standing in front of me.
He's wearing a light grey suit.
Obsidian black or cerulean blue?
He picks. He waits at the end of the aisle.
I stand alone behind closed doors.
I manage a smile,
Wait for those doors to open
And walk down alone,
Wearing a dress that resembles a cupcake

CHLOE SCHEUCH

Whispering to Papa, whom I imagine standing just beside me
“Don’t let me fall, my Papa who died smiling.”

I HOPE THIS EMAIL FINDS YOU WELL AND OTHER THINGS I THINK ABOUT IN THE SHOWER.

I first learned about a selfish god at 10 years old.
My father died and someone said
“Oh honey, God just needed another angel”

I think about the idea of belonging to borrowed time a lot.
Knowing that we don’t get to choose who we’ll say goodbye to
Or when inertia will announce his presence
Heavy eyelids, concave chests.

Momma taught me to say “maybe”
When I really mean no.
Lending agency to a word that screams:
I’m indifferent to your question.
Your indifference a muzzle to further inquiry
What if I want to say no?

When the British boy you think you’re going to marry tells you
“You’re my better half”
I suppose I’m to assume I wasn’t whole to begin with
But it turns out I like me whole without his half.

I’m 5 when I think it’s unfair
My brothers don’t have to wear shirts
But I do.
5 year old me: woke.

Older girls, they teach us
Boys are mean to you when they like you
But wonder why we grow
Like roots into a ground
Around abusive relationships and angry men

CHLOE SCHEUCH

Single-parent households
Scream disadvantage
Holiday season brings pity
But I've seen my five foot mother
Hang christmas lights on our house
Like it were her god given gift.

Courtesy begs us, begin every email with:
"I hope this finds you well"
But I must admit
I'm not sure what to say if it doesn't.

TONY GRUENEWALD
poetry

PUNCTUATION

The bullet
put a period
where a comma
should have preceded
the promise
of.

AN UNFINISHED DEFINITION OF MY BODY

My body can overflow with laughter and double over like a folding chair,
But it doesn't
When it thinks about what you did.

And my body can dance and skip with glee springing from it,
But my body slowed to a crawl after your hands violated it, smothered its'
song.

My body can use only its legs to move a thousand-pound horse,
But it couldn't force you to behave, even as it choked out –
Stop.
What are you doing.

My body – it can leap from a moving plane, trusting a parachute and
adrenaline
But it wrongly entrusted your hands to cherish it.
And the scars,
They haven't faded yet.

My body can speak in front of a room with ease and a bit of thrill,
But my body's heart rate pounds when it thinks about the years of
you
– of you and me.

My body can run for miles, asthma attacking its lungs,
But my body cannot swallow a breath if it finds you in the same
room.

My body can be hugged by the one who loves the girl behind it,
But my body freezes when fingers brush the area where my bra
lays.

How can my body still be groaning from your past fingerprints whitening
its skin?

SARAH JAMES

How are there parts of my body that still do not feel like my own?
Why was my body treated as a map for you to travel, from point A to point B?

Your hands could've gently entwined with mine.

Instead, my hands fought yours, pushing in what they didn't know
was an impossible fight.

I did not want to be explored.

Will my body always remember yours?
Or will it know, one day, that you are gone—
And it's beginning to trust the right people now.



UNTITLED

ALEXANDRA STROKINA

watercolor



UNTITLED

ALEXANDRA STROKINA

watercolor



FLEA MARKET PHOTOGRAPHS

STEVE BRISCOE

film photography
1994



FLEA MARKET PHOTOGRAPHS

STEVE BRISCOE

film photography
1994

MY FAMILIAR FACE THAT WANTS TO DIE WITH LIFE

After Clarice Lispector

We kept care of the library, the printers: you were
my Pretty Pretty Printer Genius and I was the library girl
replacing the paper rollers under your tired gaze
and your sweet waft of weed. I had the paranoia to match the technicolor:
I wanted my funky leggings and lace-up boots to move, fly down a million
international cobblestone streets, my hands
to paint an intense indigo blue on glass because sometimes,
instead of black, the night sky is starry and indigo blue.
I left and searched for the time before mirrors, when people did not know
their own face. My impression was that I was about to be born
and I couldn't quite manage it. I found Cancer's claws dazzling sharply
above the ship docked in Argentina; a month later the waxing moon
emerged
from the North Sea, leaving a long squiggle of gold in the desolate black
water:
the time had come to be responsible for my face, reflected in the sea.

Illuminated and translucid with the same vibrant silence of a mirror, I
came back
empty-handed from the desert; looking for a way to negate
equating the image in the mirror with a twin, I had followed
the pull of April's full moon eclipse over my body, standing alone near
the Kostverlorenkade. June's super moonlight was sexually awkward
and then I fled, my eyes closed. I left my apartment
in De Baarsjes, I gave up on mirrors to make me responsible
for my face, I returned to my life different only in that I
was the unsolved factor: as I walked out of the immigration detention
center
I crystalized in the continual act of being born
is the same, has been the same, will be the same: as if the right place
is the ego-ist place, the library gates, you're telling me
about the most amazing shooting start you've ever seen
and I'm forgetting to ask if you made a wish.

SUN DISC AND ITS PRODIGY

After Clarice Lispector

Los Angeles is blonde hair, orange bands, black roots
and I am cars driving on the side of other cars, we are both
despairing and runny and trying to parallel park on abrupt curves.
Dutch people think California is always sunny
ask me why I came back to rainy Holland but last December
I wished the sunny sky and the white sun wouldn't force me
outdoors, I wished I could continue to macerate in the cool
shady side of large houses. My Los Angeles friends
were losing matriarchs and dying on isolated cliffs and us survivors
were shuttling ourselves to funerals, trying to pass the holidays
by eating pills. Self assurance is wearing a bronze diadem over your hair
and I was bareheaded. I didn't know what significance
arriving or departing held but I kept coming and going, kept professing
to desire a cloak woven with threads of solar gold.

THE YEAR WITHOUT A SUMMER

*"And there's the vigor of a robust trunk, of roots buried
in the living earth that responds by giving them abundant food."
Stream of Life Clarice Lispector*

Couldn't stop thinking this year
will be another year without a summer you said
a slow gradual spring gave way to an abrupt fall
but in fact all of 1816 froze seeds and killed
tubers; this year in Amsterdam I gauged time
watching wet laundry drip and it seemed the Elms
would never push out their tips, their bony consciousness
would never reflect in the canals. But with you
I'm in Berlin and we're strolling Grolitzer Park and here
single sweet May has always been erupting
in white and pink and fuchsia, Neokölln has always been vibrating
with lime leaf and maple branch, Tempelhofer has always been
flowering weeds and smoking barbecues. You dragged me out
of winter and you will be stuck in spring forever.

DEATH AND CECIL COPPERPOT

There was once a time when the world's boundaries began to stretch, and people relied upon maps to tell them what was where and how to get there. Mapmakers had to be unerringly accurate; the places they drew were historical, influential, and, above all, important.

So, it was a shame when, one day, a rather prominent mapmaker got something very wrong in his drawings. He had received a new sketch from one of the many explorers for hire, a booming profession at the time. It was, unfortunately, rather bland. Just trees and mountains, two small towns with two small mines, hardly anything anyone would pay money to find. And look, he thought, there was even a smudge on the sketch, an inaccuracy that wasn't worth the explorer fees to verify. He dismissed the entire thing because of that one smudge and catalogued the area as empty space not worth anyone's time.

The thing is, it wasn't a smudge on that map. It was the marking for Greymoor, a smudge of a village on the outskirts of the kingdom, discovered ages ago and immediately left behind. It was called Greymoor because every day the sky was grey, and the land was, well, a moor. A life in Greymoor was barely worth calling a life. There was no work to be had in the actual village. The land was terrible for farming and just about everything else. Every day, the people walked to the mines for work and, every night, they walked back home. It wasn't far, but it wasn't fun either, what with the ground trying to slurp up their feet every time they set them down.

The town was so ordinary that it was boring, and so boring that it was never bothered by the King and his tax collectors. That was a large part of the reason why it was still inhabited.

But there was one—just one—very extraordinary thing about Greymoor. Death lived there. Along the farthest edge of the village, Death held a small estate, his house the only one made of stone and iron. With a different owner, the house might have been considered beautiful. But when asked about it, the people of Greymoor called it impressive out loud and terrifying in their heads. Death had that effect on everything, architecture included.

No person would ever willingly be a neighbor with Death. Bad enough was life in Greymoor, but adding Death in the mix put a damper on everything that didn't need dampening. Why did Death live there?

Well, there was a rumor going around, amongst the Greymoor citizens who knew him best, that Death was rather fond of tradition. After all, he had been the same since time's beginning so, naturally, he wanted everything around him, the people included, to remain the same as well. And when Death told you to not move and be happy with the bog and the tax breaks, you listened.

Not to discredit the people of Greymoor, but this explanation was hogwash. Yes, Death liked the village of Greymoor. But there was a far better reason, a far less selfish reason, for his and the people's continued stay there: destiny.

Not Destiny who lived high in the cloudy mountains and never invited Death over for tea, but destiny, the serendipitous occurrence of something extraordinary. You see, Death was usually the one to clean up after history had already been made. He picked up the pieces, spared a few here and there, all after the dust had settled and the extraordinary history was on its way back out the door. But sometimes Death himself made history, and he chose his loyal neighbors of Greymoor to assist him. On one particular night, he chose Cecil Copperpot.

The Copperpots had come to Greymoor and settled there at almost the same time as Death. As far back as everyone remembered, a Copperpot was living in Greymoor, and they had always been tinkers. Cecil was a tinker, his son, Silas, was a tinker, and his grandson, Cecil II, would grow up to be a tinker. What everyone did not know was that the Copperpots had a streak of curiosity running through their generations. Cecil's great-great-many times over-great-grandfather had in fact invented copper cookware, thus giving the family the name Copperpot. And though copper cookware was the last inventive thing to come out of the family all the way down to Cecil II, that never stopped a Copperpot from having an inventive brain and a burning desire to do something with it.

Greymoor, unfortunately, was not the place to nurture creativity or inspiration. It was a place where everyone moved from one day to the next and spent their brainpower counting how much food they had to last through the harsh winters. And so, Cecil Copperpot, many times over-great-grandson of the inventor of copper cookware, was merely a tinker who banged out the dents of copper pots and felt like he was banging in his own skull every time he did so.

That's what caused Death to take note of him. Cecil, you see, had the most inventive brain of all the Copperpots, barring little Cecil II whose infantile brain remained a mystery. Ideas flowed through his mind faster

than anyone could imagine, great ideas, world-changing ideas. But Cecil never once did anything with those ideas because he had a family to provide for and could not afford to take the risk. He would have needed to travel far to put his ideas into practice, and Cecil valued his family far more than his personal desire to invent. And so, every day, for his long life, Cecil got up in the morning and set to work not on what he wanted to do, but on what his family needed him to do, never once complaining. He was content, and Death was proud of his neighbor, right up until the night Cecil died.

That night, Death was excited. He had wanted to meet Cecil for quite some time. True, he could have gone down on market day and given Cecil something to tinker with in order to strike up a conversation, but that wasn't really his style. Death had a reputation to uphold, so he usually did his meet-and-greets at the same time he collected souls. Therefore, it took him ninety-seven years before he got to have a conversation with Cecil. It did not go quite as he had planned.

Death entered the Copperpot household easily. The door was not locked; there was nothing worth stealing. It was a three-room house: a bedroom, a washroom, and the main room. Cecil was asleep on a tiny little cot in the main room. Death's admiration grew. Cecil, self-sacrificing man that he was, had allowed his son, daughter-in-law, and grandson the one bedroom in the home and took the drafty, tiny, and slightly dirty (if Death were to look closely) room as his. It was exactly how Death had pictured him.

Death approached slowly, not wanting to rush the moment. Cecil's cot took up a large portion of the corner, right next to the fireplace. At the foot of it was a small chest that no doubt held Cecil's clothes and meager belongings. A rough bench sat next to the cot, littered with all manner of tinkering things, every now and then dotted with an empty plate or cup. A lump of wax, still stubbornly calling itself a candle, was adhered to the bedpost—not a very safe spot, but Death didn't really take note of such things. All in all, Death was rather impressed, and a little saddened, by the perfect microcosm of Cecil's home—all his daily needs within reach, no need to get up or look out the single window.

It was fitting, in an unfortunate sort of way. He noted Cecil's wrinkled face and gnarled hands. This man had lived a long life, Death thought with a small nod. Tonight was a good night to end it, but first...

With a cautious, spindly finger, Death gave Cecil's shoulder a prod. Cecil awoke to find Death standing over him.

“Hello,” Death said with a small wave, hoping to ease the tension. Cecil took a short second to process the implications of this late-night visit, then buried his head in his hands and wept.

“No, no,” he cried, utterly distressed. “You can’t be here! I’m not ready! I’m not ready!”

“Oh,” was all Death could think to say. True, most people cried or screamed when they met with him, but he had not expected that reaction from Cecil, who had weathered so much more than mere Death in his lifetime. He briefly wondered what Cecil was seeing. Death’s visible appearance fluctuated, interpreted differently by each individual. No one could pin down exactly what he looked like, but everyone left with a complete certainty that they had indeed met Death. Looking at Cecil sobbing, Death was sure Cecil was seeing the ever-popular, ominous cloak version of himself. He was more than a little disappointed.

“Why?” Cecil continued to moan. He was indeed seeing Death’s shrouded figure, but he was a bit more focused on his own fate in that moment. Death, though, was slightly stung at the lack of attention, not that he would admit it to anyone.

“Why am I to die now?” Cecil murmured.

“Mr. Copperpot,” Death began hesitantly, “you are ninety-seven years old. I should think now is as good a time as ever.”

Cecil cried louder at the painful truth and Death was at a complete loss. He should have known better than to chat with his hero on death day. He should have just gone to market. But he couldn’t grab Cecil’s soul and be done with it, not like this. He didn’t want Cecil’s last and only impression of him to be, well, *deathly*. He wanted Cecil to see how proud Death was of him and his life, and sobbing old men did not fit in with Death’s vision.

“Mr. Copperpot,” Death tried again, regaining Cecil’s wayward focus. “I am not going to take you just yet. First I—”

“I’m not to die?” Cecil interrupted, a smile blossoming on his face, banishing his grief. He seemed years younger just from excitement. Death sighed.

“Well, yes, you are.” Cecil’s face fell. “But first I would like to congratulate you on your life. I have been watching you all these years and I must say—”

“Congratulate me?” Cecil repeated, his face unreadable. “On *my* life?” The old man frowned, and Death felt the urge to take a step back. He didn’t, because of that reputation mentioned earlier, but the feeling was

there nonetheless.

“I have done nothing with my life!” Cecil shouted, attempting to convey nearly a century of desperation in one moment. “My life has been wasted all its years! I could have changed the world! I could have been something!”

Here Death tried to interrupt, but Cecil would have none of it.

“And now I am to die, here, in this dirty little hovel, and no one will ever know who I was. No one will have benefited from my life and my death will be meaningless.”

Cecil began to weep once more, his speech and fire gone, leaving him the withered old man that he was. Death felt a stirring in his chest, somewhere about the location of a heart. Cecil did not want to die as he was, and suddenly, Death didn’t want to take him.

“Mr. Copperpot,” Death said quietly, “may I show you something?” Cecil was no longer in the mood for conversation. He gave a little shrug and a large sniffle which Death took for a resounding yes.

From his cloak, Death pulled out a mirror given to him by Time. Time was an old friend of Death’s. One day, eons ago, Death had pulled Time out of a rather complicated situation by shuffling a few lives around. Time had given Death a mirror in gratitude. The mirror showed the flow of time. Death found it a great help to plan out his days, knowing what was going to happen and to whom. One just had to speak the name of a person into the mirror and a whole life story would be shown. It was generally not recommended for humans to catch a glimpse of this mirror. After all, it was given from one immortal to another whose job it was to handle such weighty revelations with grace and style. Humans didn’t have that kind of composure. However, Death felt that today, Cecil’s death day, he could break this rule if it meant easing Cecil’s soul.

And so, Death whispered into the mirror, “Cecil Copperpot.”

Colors and shapes swirled in the mirror hypnotically, causing old Cecil to lift his head out of his sorrow and pay attention. Death held the mirror to him so he could see what it had to show him.

Cecil saw a young man who looked remarkably like him. He was clothed richly, and his face was full and flushed in good health. He wore the easy smile of a man with no cares. This young man sat in a workroom, a large workroom with every single tool a curiously creative tinker could ever dream of having. All kinds of gizmos and thingamajigs littered the tables and shelves. It was the kind of workroom Cecil would have dreamed to have in his home. Then the scene changed; the young man was slightly

older and stood in the most ornate room that Cecil had ever seen in his long life. He stood before a throne and on that throne sat the King. Cecil had never seen the King before, but he felt certain the man in the vision was royalty, and Cecil was awed. The King was applauding the young man who smiled and bowed before shaking hands with his sovereign. The scene shifted once more. Now the young man was no longer young, but he still wore the same smile. He was back in a shop, only this shop was much grander than the one before, causing Cecil to change his mind and dream of having *that* room instead of the first. People were coming and going, all taking away some invention or other and thanking the man profusely.

Finally, the colors and shapes disappeared and the mirror, once again, was only a mirror. Cecil looked back up at Death, eager for an explanation.

"This is the life of Cecil Copperpot," Death reported solemnly. "He was the earth's most brilliant inventor. He changed lives for the better and was sought after by kings. He lived comfortably and richly and he was kind to all who met him. He was important."

"I don't understand," Cecil stuttered, something akin to hope igniting in his chest. "I didn't live that life...could I?"

"Would you like to?" Death asked. Cecil sat up as straight as he could, his smile back, hope fully aflame.

"Yes! Yes, please!" he cried. "I would give anything to live that life."

"Would you give your wife?" Death asked. He tapped the mirror and it again came to life, showing a very young Cecil holding out a shaking hand filled with wildflowers to a young lady. The scene was replaced by a young Cecil tinkering in his room and that same young lady passing him by, neither sparing the other a glance.

"If you were to become this man," Death stated, "you would be so involved with your inventions you would miss meeting your future wife."

"No, no," Cecil reasoned, scrambling for a better solution. "I can start inventing *after* I am married. I married in my youth. I would still have plenty of time to change the world."

Death tapped the mirror. "It will not matter, for during one of your experiments, there will be an accident and your wife will be killed." Cecil looked away from the mirror at the moment the little house in which his younger self was tinkering burst into flames.

"No," he whispered, unable to wipe away the image of the fire. "I will not kill her. I will do my experimenting away from home and travel so

that I may keep my wife safe.”

“Very well.” Death tapped the mirror, keeping a careful eye on the old man before him. This wouldn’t be easy. “Your travels take you away and you will miss the birth of your son, Silas.”

Cecil watched his wife in the mirror cry out for a husband who was not to come for many days. He huffed, brow furrowing in pain, and for a moment Death felt awful for showing him such things. But Death was an expert on stubborn old men, and he knew Cecil would not break, not yet.

“Surely by that time I shall be a great inventor,” Cecil said, though his voice lacked conviction, and his insides felt cold and dead. “I will take a break from work for the duration of my wife’s pregnancy to assure I will be there for her and my son.”

Death gave a dismissive shrug. “If you choose to remain home, then an incident that happens to you on the road will never happen. That incident would have been the moment of inspiration for your greatest invention and would have sent you to the courts of kings. For your son, you will remain anonymous.”

Cecil pounded his fists weakly, angry at Death for tricking him. “Is there nothing I can do that is great? Why show me such things I have wanted all my life just to take away something I love more? My life will never be important!”

With that Cecil turned away and buried himself back in his blankets. “Just take me away and spare my family the shame of living with such a useless man,” he muttered, giving up.

Death sighed, feeling pity for the man and shame for himself. But he was not about to give up on Cecil, not when Cecil had never given up for ninety-seven years. Death prodded Cecil’s shoulder and waited patiently for him to look up again.

“May I show you something else, Mr. Copperpot?” he asked.

“No!” Cecil shouted, but Death took it as another yes anyway.

He tapped the mirror and whispered, “Cecil Copperpot.”

Again, the mirror swirled into the vision of the young man who looked like Cecil. The old Cecil tried to look away, but Death stopped him and bid him watch.

The vision went farther back in time, to when this young man was even younger. He was walking through a small cemetery, eyes wandering among the gravestones, clearly looking for someone. Just as he was about to stop, he tripped and toppled over right in front of a gravestone that read:

Cecil Copperpot

7 May 1395—31 December 1492

Husband, Father, Grandfather, Provider

May his love and sacrifice never be forgotten

The young man's eyes lit up and he gasped. He scrambled up, never taking his eyes off the gravestone.

"That's it!" he cried. "That's it! Oh, thank you, Grandfather!" He leaned down and hugged the gravestone before sprinting off shouting, "Father! You won't believe what I've just thought of!"

The mirror images faded away. Death and Cecil were left in quiet darkness.

"That was my grave," Cecil said. It wasn't a question, but Death answered anyway.

"Yes."

"And that was my grandson, Cecil II."

"Yes."

"I don't understand," Cecil moaned, looking down at his gnarled hands as though they held the answers. Death stowed away the mirror. He no longer needed it.

"The life that I showed you before was the life of Cecil Copperpot II," Death said. "Your grandson. He will become the earth's most brilliant inventor. He will change lives and be sought after by kings. He will live in comfort and riches. He will be important.

"He becomes this way because, throughout his young life, he will be told how his father's father wanted the very best for his children and his children's children. How his grandfather sacrificed everything to make the world a better place for his family. He will be inspired and become the best tinker in all the land. And one day, when he goes to visit his grandfather's grave as he does every day, he will trip and then he will see, really *see*, the year his grandfather died. That number will be the exact calculation needed to finish his project. It will be the link that forms a chain in his mind to lead to the greatest discovery the world has ever known."

Death stood and stepped away from Cecil, waiting for him to look up. When he did, Cecil looked changed. He had tears in his eyes, but Death could tell they were not of sadness. They were of pride. The years that had worn Cecil down were washed away in the steady drip of those tears, and though Cecil looked at Death, he was not seeing him. His gaze

was locked onto something private, intimate, within a mortal world and a mortal existence that Death, the immortal, was only privy to in moments like these.

“My grandson,” Cecil whispered, seeing the future he had always wanted to provide for his family, really *seeing* it. And then he smiled.

“Mr. Copperpot,” Death said, smiling as well, “whether you choose to believe it or not, you are the most important person in the world at this very moment. The day of your death, this very day, will change the world because it will change your son and your grandson.

“Take it from me, Mr. Copperpot: sometimes the meaning of life is found in death.”

Death held out his hand and waited. He did not have to wait long. Cecil Copperpot, father to Silas, grandfather to Cecil II, and many times over-great-grandson of the inventor of copper cookware, stood up on shaking legs, looked Death square in the eye without an inkling of fear, and placed his gnarled, wrinkled hand in his.

And in that moment, the world was changed.

Over a century later, Greymoor was no longer a boggy, tax-free smudge on a map. People traveled from all over the world to visit the place where the great inventor, Cecil Copperpot II, began his work. With every new invention and masterpiece that Cecil II sent out to the world, hundreds of people poured into Greymoor to be the first to own and use it. The influx of people brought new jobs to the village that in turn brought trade. In a smattering of decades, Greymoor, though it would remain remote and overcast, was a driving force in the kingdom’s economy. The roads were paved, and muddy shoes became a thing of the past. Buildings sprang up like weeds, and Death was no longer the only one with a house made of stone. The village became a town and the town became a city and that city became a prominent spot on almost every map in the land.

But some things remained the same. Death still lived in Greymoor in his scarily beautiful house that no one visited. He still watched his neighbors for signs of greatness. But while everyone else visited the museum dedicated to showcasing Cecil II’s life work, Death could be seen roaming the tombstones of the cemetery and stopping to trace the numbers on a certain stone.

If anyone had been brave enough to ask why—though no one was—he would have simply replied that he was visiting the most important man in the world.

CARCINOGEN

Lately, an infertile valley. An old war-damaged church. Naught, as in

the lungs can't hold it all in anymore. Breath, as in a fawn

scraping her dry tongue raw on red arroyo sands. The bullet

another's hunger pushes deep into her hide. A mother

who tries to inhale the world away, porcheside, pluming

like the smoke stacks dad says define this

afterthought of horizon. To fail,

is what I mean, at owning one's face.

As in tell me everything you need to ruin to make

a body livable again. To live in it, lately, after its ruin (steeple

snapped off, this hollowed fist of land unclenching,

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

deer skin stretched over
the mantle, all one's violences

contained in a single cell, finally,
spreading). As in the birds

draw their arrows back. Fire. *Fire.*
The air, I mean. That sting.

ON THIS NIGHT, OR ANY OTHER

A brokenly lit road bisects a pasture
no horses have trampled, devoured, prayed

with their whole bodies to in more years
than your father can count. Or grandfather.

But there are stories older than
a town's collapse. Than bruise & hand-me-

down overalls two sizes larger than anyone
could wear without falling, without a faceful of earth.

Than the sneers others pretend to hide behind
their delicate hands. Yours are calloused over & want

for something to want for. A single gesture to mean
your body is more than vessel, less than what passes for

love now. What passes for love now hurts
your knees. The denim's worn down in places,

stained in others; not by grease & grasswork, history.
In this story it's okay for a strange boy to enter you

ungently & unasked for, for something inside
to grow from it. It's a holy thing, the stories say.

You, lying there motionless under a full weight of sky.
Suffocating. Dreaming. A field. Naked but for the foal they made

you dream there.



A SAFE PLACE TO CRY

NICHOLE SPENCER

collage

GIFTS

in no particular order

when you a baby everything belongs to you & it is ok
to kick & scream & cry & shake your tiny brown fists
at the air or pound the ground & you get to have it
all —a small red ball, a dirty dress sock men's size 11,
the telephone's curly cord, the spine of a jet mag,
mommy's mug from universal studios: **SHIRLEY**
printed near the rim. her name grandma's name too.
this mug the only mug grandma drinks anything caffeine out of,
but if the mug is in your tiny brown fists,
it's yours.

//

your room the hottest room in the house, built right on
top of the boiler. when it's not too hot, you teach your
stuffed animals how to read & write. when it is
too hot, this room is where you sleep & [cannot take this
body with you] heavy dream. in this dream you a
witch & they hunt you like they hunt witches
in salem—only you also a slave: there will be no trial
after [re]capture. the only way you know you a witch
is cuz you grow tall enough to pluck sleeping birds
from trees. but you aint got enough pluck for survival &
wonder. your skin the color of curfew. no one sees
you let your height go to run & leap from rooftop to
rooftop. your seams collect north stardust. each leap an
enduring rhythm hurled against your soles [even in the
raw] they refuse tired. you run 'til you come across a lit
up tavern. small as a heartbeat you crawl under a table.
they don't see you but you see they faces: long sticks of
melted candle wax, a fury that baffles your terror, iron
writhing in their hands. you forget you a witch.
[remember:—you—a—slave] [&] wake up.

//

mommy gives you a journal: you can write anything in it, even cuss
me out & i won't read
it. you believe her. first thing you write about is grandma pulling you & gj
outta school.
today your birthday. y'all go see space jam. get happy meals. each one
comes with a toy.
gj gets a bugs bunny stuffed toy. you get lola bunny. mommy calls you
upstairs to get ready
for bed. you grab lola bunny & a bedtime story. you hope your old toys are
not jealous.
mommy knocks on your door. *you left your journal on the couch. you
should be more
careful about leaving your private things all around the house.* you
forget the bedtime
story & ask to stay up a little while longer. you write about gj & lola &
grandma & monstars
in space.

//

mr. dean is your english teacher. y'all read audiobooks in class: the one
about coyotito, the pigman, miracle's boys, the lord of the flies, flowers
for algernon. maybe mr. dean also your social studies teacher. one day
he asks the whole class to push their seats away from their desks, get
down
on the floor & crawl under the desks—kinda like what you would do
in an earthquake, except ain't no earthquakes in the bronx. mr. dean
wants
the class to pretend they slaves so the class could know what it's like
to be cargo on a slave ship during the transatlantic slave trade. you,
khadijah
& kimmie decide y'all don't need to know what it's like to be cargo. y'all
remain
seated in chairs & look toward your class—brown & uniformed under
their desks.
when the bell rings, *you all are free to go.*

//

NEFERTITI ASANTI

you write poems. the poems do not win school prizes or the heart of a pale
puerto rican
boy who never reads your poems (even if most of them are about him).
you never give him
a poem to read. you give him a smile & he returns your smile because he
is kind &
pentecostal. he ½ dates some girl from a class dumber than yours. she is
popular & latina
& you are not pretty yet. you are not upset because you understand. you
½ date some boy
named peter's cousin because his hair is long like lil' bow wow's hair. (you
don't even like
lil' bow wow.) you & not-lil' bow wow meet up after school away from a
crowd of 7th, 8th
& should-be 9th graders. school safety officers usher them toward the
train station so the
fight that forms the crowd can happen off school grounds. your best
friend katie stands
away from the crowd with you. you & lil' bow wow's twin hold hands for
almost 2 minutes.
this happens again every other day for two weeks but never on weekends
then stops. you
return to your poems.

//

ms. brown gives you a picture
with no words. the picture is
full of too many dolls to count
& a smiling black woman. you
count the dolls anyway cuz you
want to tell the truth (a little).
129. you call this woman sarah
& write about sarah & her dolls.
all of her dolls are black & all
of their eyes are open, smiling
at you. none of their eyes are
missing. this is the first time
you are allowed to tell a story
for other people to hear & not
get in trouble for making it up.

MORRO BAY: JUST THE FACTS

1.

The western snowy
plover, brown bordering on gray,
with a thin dark bill and white or buff belly,
averages six inches in length and lays
three to five eggs.

2.

After the confirmed
shark sighting, I take a photo
with the pier: blown-up, the posts
creak with life.

3.

The rock that is there
and the rock that is not there
are one and the same: a volcanic plug
keeping things whole.

4.

It's time for the fog
to go.

5.

I wish I were a sea otter:
placing a stone on my chest
and pounding against it everything
that makes me stronger.

6.

Along the strand: sons and daughters
frolicking to the sound of *Chariots of Fire*
whistled by their parents.

7.

Unlike the invasive European
beach grass

I leave my shoes on
and keep off the dunes.

The waves—cold, colder, freezing—
stay back, too.

NOBODY SEES MY HORNS - A
DREAM

You twisted on your bed though still at sea in dreams—
So charging bulls and yaks with moaning skulls and rams
In combat, head to head and horn on horn, and CRASH!—
Pull back then charge!— and elks with antlers scratching at
The gods— Awake!— their goat— Awake! Oh oh my god!
A heaviness you feel. Hung over like you sipped
The harbor dry. Your boat now rests on earth that's hard
And cracked, a solid keel on mud— like stone— your heart—
Is pounding— but it seems— your hand— that tries— to rub—
Your eyes— just hit-- a HORN! Oh *come* on now! COME ON!
A horn— just means— more dreams. No no it's not, you're wide
Awake— come welcome morning— time to rise— Sun's light—
All that— get up— up!— stand!— you!— now!— not then!— and now!—
Once more— you raise— your hand— and rub it— feel— it's there.

You lift your other palm and let it slide on horn.
There's two of them? of these? of those? But what the hell
Is going on?

Stay calm.

You know you need some eggs.

And milk. Poem two said— peas? Or beans? Where is that poem?
You have two horns— and need to eat. Last night you felt
The need to drink. Last night, pathetically, to flirt.
With who? With walls. So feed your glorious god's needs.
And now that morning light flows fire down the street.
Within such flames the supermarket shines, and look—
Your angel opens doors for you, all by its wings.
You sip this morning's dew. You kiss the dove. It moans
So, then it flew, it mourns with feathers and it soars.
Goodbye. You *bang* the can down on the shelf! And pick
It up. The can *again*! Bang *it*! Just where to pay?

If I have horns, in fact, if I have shame, or pain,

If I'm awake, and this— my sleep— God never wakes—
Oh Cashier come, reject my cash and burn my cans
And show me out. Please hiss. Come on. Moo. Spit the curse.
Please, call the Manager. Just call him quick! And yet
The kid— just rings it— how? He doesn't blink. I look
Around, the manager is yawning, chewing gum.
My rage is boiling now, I feel such rage. Yes, you!
The customer behind me with the pancake mix,
Food in the cart— you better look. "I cannot see
Your horns. No sir. Don't mind me, though." Invisible?
Unseen? I have a set of horns and two pulled from
My skull? So what's it for? I scream. Chagrin. And rage.
Alarm clock's screaming for my mind. Up, hornless head.

ALL HERE

The neon Tini's Paninis sign glows red and green, flashing sporadically. Lydia shuffles toward the beckoning light. The food court bustles with people and they're all dressed in white. Lydia glances down at her own outfit—it matches the color of her hair. A crisp white shirt, white cloth pants, and white shoes. She shrugs, guessing she chose all white this morning too. She doesn't remember. She has to focus. Tini's Paninis.

A dark figure wearing a clean red apron stands at the register. It has absolutely no features. It looks like someone took a black Sharpie and scribbled messily inside the outline of a person in a coloring book. The figure says something but the words are faint and muffled.

"What?" Lydia shouts in a frail voice, cupping her hand to her ear.

Again, it just murmurs. It holds up a hand and then brings its hand to its stomach, shaking a bit. She assumes it's laughing.

She cackles forcefully. "That's so funny!"

Okay, focus. Tini's Paninis.

"Alright, so I'd like to order a panini," she says, slowing her words to calm her nerves. The scribbled face cocks its head so she continues. "Turkey pesto on wheat with sun-dried tomatoes."

It brings up its hand and pulls it toward its stomach again, so Lydia laughs with it once more.

"Oh, geez. That's hilarious." She rubs her eyes. "Okay, how much?"

The figure holds up five squiggly fingers, but then a sixth one slowly grows and wriggles its way out the side of its wrist.

She clicks her tongue. "Don't try to trick me," she warns it, "because I know it's five dollars."

The sixth finger shrinks back into its wrist. She chuckles, shaking her head, and reaches into the pocket of her white pants to pull out a sparkling blue bill. It's so thin that she can't even feel it between her fingers. Glistening and fluttering rapidly in her hands, the bill tries to escape.

"Hurry, sir! Touch it before it flies!"

The scribbled figure throws its arm out toward Lydia's hand and touches the blue bill. It bursts into glittery pieces. The pieces dance toward the figure like embers and fly down to hide away in the register.

"Okay, thank you!" Lydia waves and steps to the side to wait for the

panini. Turkey pesto on wheat with sun-dried tomatoes. Lydia stuffs her hands in her pockets and rocks back and forth on her heels and toes.

Suddenly, two heavy hands slam onto Lydia's shoulders and push her down into a chair. She yelps as her bottom hits the hard seat. Looking at her shoulders, she sees the two hands are wearing white gloves. The hands then release her shoulders and buckle her into the seat.

"Hey, wait! The panini!" she screams. The gloved hands ignore her and yank on the seat belt to tighten it.

"The panini! Turkey pesto on wheat with sun-dried tomatoes! Turkey pesto on wheat with sun-dried tomatoes!" she cries, reaching out toward the scribbled figure. But the scribbled figure isn't there anymore, and, as she's pulled backward, Tini's Paninis shrinks fast—so fast that it's now the size of her hand, still stretched out in front of her. Now it's gone, and she's whipped around in this chair by the gloved white hands.

"Tini's Paninis!"

The gloved hands roll Lydia to a white door with a rusty door handle.

"Open the door," the gloved hands demand in a deep voice. Lydia's hands clutch the handles of the seat.

"But Tini's Paninis," she croaks, "and turkey pesto on wheat with sun-dried to—"

"Open the door, Lydia."

She gasps and the skin on her face freezes over from the top of her forehead, crackling and crystalizing, down to the tip of her chin. How did the white gloved hands know her name? Her lips are frozen shut so she can't ask them. She wiggles her fingers, swings her arms, and, realizing they're not frozen, repeatedly smashes the ice on her face.

"Oh, God, Lydia," the gloved hands groan and one grasps Lydia's wrist. "Don't hit your face!"

The ice chips slowly fall off, clinking on the ground. Lydia exhales, finally able to speak.

"How do you know my name?" she wheezes, gazing at the white glove clamped around her right wrist.

"Lydia, please just open the door."

The gloved hand still grasps her, so she doesn't really have a choice. Lydia uses her left hand to pull the rusty handle down and kicks the door open with her feet.

"Thank you." The gloved hand releases her wrist and she's pushed

into a room full of the same people she saw in the food court. They're still in their white clothes but they're sitting at tables in this room now, drinking out of white Styrofoam cups or playing chess or writing under the heading, "Today I feel..." on a whiteboard. The red letters on the board wiggle and morph into "Today I fear...." Lydia shrinks into her white outfit.

"Okay, where do you want to sit today?" the gloved hands ask her.

"I... I..." she stammers. "I don't know. All I want is my panini. Where am I? I want my panini."

The gloved hands slip away for a second and a young man crouches down in front of her. He is also wearing all white but it's a sharper outfit with shiny gold buttons down the center of his shirt. His bulging eyes contrast with the sunken under-eye bags that weigh on his face. He looks at Lydia impatiently.

"Lydia, forget about the panini—please. Let's take you to a table, okay?"

She figures the gloved hands belong to him because his own gloved hand moves forward to hold hers. Lydia looks up to see the pools of gray underneath his eyes suck into his tear ducts, filling and turning his eyeballs dark like ink filled balloons. She pulls her hand away and screams.

He groans and rolls his eyes, clearing the black. "Lyd, come on! I'm just trying to help you." He quickly rises from his squat and disappears behind her. She's rolled toward a white table where an older man and a teenage girl are playing cards. When she stops at the table, the older man's head slowly turns up from his card hand to look at her.

"Oh, Lydia," he breathes hoarsely, immediately letting out multiple dry coughs. He recovers. "It's so nice to see you today."

"How do you know my name?" Lydia insists. The old man cackles and slaps his leg. The girl shakes her head, keeping her eyes on the cards. The cards vibrate in her hands.

The old man holds up his hand. "Lyd, it's me, Alex. You're here every day! You know me—don't worry!" he reassures her with a smile.

"What are you talking about?" Lydia stammers, watching the cards in the girl's hands. "I just wanted a panini and now I'm here." The cards are shaking faster.

"Oh, not the panini again," Alex complains, glancing toward the girl for a response. She just stares at her cards. They shake violently in her hands and Lydia knows they're going to fly up toward the girl and slice her

face.

“Watch out!” Lydia yells, lunging at the cards. They spill out of her hands, some landing on the table and others floating to the ground like dead leaves.

“What the fuck, Lydia? What was that for?” the girl snaps. She slams her hands on the table, stands, and breathes out through her nose. She glares at Lydia. “You really aren’t getting better, are you?”

“Katja, stop it.” The white gloves reappear, one on each side of Lydia, holding a white Styrofoam cup and a pack of pale soda crackers. Lydia hesitantly reaches for them with both hands and then snatches them from the gloves.

Katja rolls her eyes. “What do you want me to say, Jack? ‘Wow, Lydia, thank you so much for punching the cards out of my goddamn hands!’” She huffs and sits back down, crossing her legs. “I’m not picking those cards up off the ground. You’re doing it, Lydia.”

Lydia watches the cards on the ground swim over and around each other like flat red, black, and white koi fish. The hearts swim with the spades and the diamonds with the clubs.

Club. Sandwich. The panini.

Lydia turns to Jack in the white gloves. “Please take me to Tini’s Paninis,” she pleads. “Please.”

He looks at her blankly.

“Lydia, please, not the paninis again. Not the paninis!” Alex cries out, shaking his hands above his head. They start to stretch like putty and grow toward the ceiling.

“Pick up my fucking cards, Lydia!” Katja rages, her eyes widening from the size of a quarter to a chocolate coin to a CD.

“Not the paninis!”

“Pick up the cards right fucking now!”

“Turkey pesto on wheat with sun-dried tomatoes!” Lydia weeps, throwing her Styrofoam cup and crackers onto the table. Red juice splatters and seeps into the sleeves of Alex’s and Katja’s white shirts.

“My shirt!” Alex screams, clutching his arm where the juice touched him.

Katja hisses, “Why would you do that? Oh my God!” She pulls at her hair and screams.

“Alright, that’s enough!” Jack pulls Lydia away from the table as

Alex mourns his ruined shirt and Katja swears at her with a crooked finger.

He rolls Lydia toward a different, large door that leads into a dark hallway. Lydia looks back at the rusty handle door and spots the scribbled figure behind the door's window. He stands in his red apron behind the glass.

"Wait! He's there!" Lydia announces and points toward the rusty handle door.

Jack stops.

"It's the scribbly guy from Tini's Paninis!"

Jack pushes her even faster toward the large door.

"Wait, wait! I need to get the panini! I promised!" she shouts, looking back at the scribbled figure as it uses her panini to wave goodbye, sun-dried tomatoes falling out the sides with every sway. Jack ignores Lydia. His white glove grips a card that he holds against the sensor next to the door. The door automatically opens and he wheels her into the dim hallway. Doors line the white walls on each side of her. Something snarls at the end of the hall.

"No, no! Take me back!"

"No, you're going to bed early tonight because of your behavior."

Lydia trembles in her chair as she's pushed closer and closer toward the snarling.

"Please, take me back. I need to pick up the panini," she whispers. An eight-eyed goopy beast slinks into the light. She shrieks.

"Get me out!"

The monster growls and slides toward her. Right when it's a foot away, Jack cards into Room 351 and wheels her straight in to face the dark window. The door closes behind her and she waits for a minute, feeling lost and frightened. Jack turns her around to face him. But it's not Jack. It's some other man. He has a very round face and is wearing green plaid. He squats down to her level.

"Lydia, this is your room. You're sleeping here tonight. No one's gonna attack you. You're safe here, and someone in the morning will be there for you. Alright?" the man tells her. She nods and decides to ask this new man.

"Can you please take me to Tini's Paninis? I need the turkey pesto on—"

"—On wheat with sun-dried tomatoes," he finishes her sentence.

“Yes, you can go tomorrow.”

Lydia nods and he gets up to walk out.

“Sir?”

“Yes?”

“Where am I?”

“You’re...” he pauses. “You’re safe.”

He’s right. She feels safe. She can get the panini tomorrow. She likes this man in plaid.

“Goodnight, sir.”

“Goodnight... Lydia. Sleep well.”

Thomas strolls through the front door. The lobby is filled with blue couches and has that familiar yet nauseating smell of disinfectant. He shudders and walks up to the receptionist.

“Hi, Patty. I’m here to see my mother,” Thomas states.

The receptionist grins her overlined red lips. “Thomas, what a surprise to see you on a Saturday!” She pauses, “Weren’t you here yesterday like you usually are?”

He looks at his watch and lets out an awkward laugh. “Sure was, but it’s my mom’s birthday today.”

“Oh, happy birthday to her!” the receptionist cheers as she keeps her eyes on the computer, clicking things. “Looks like your mother just woke up, according to the notes here. You should be good to go in.”

Patty extends her arm with a key card and Thomas takes it from her.

“Thanks so much, Patty.”

“And you look very nice!” she adds.

He looks down at his collared shirt, tie, and slacks. He had to dress up for Mom’s birthday. He waves to say thanks and opens the door to the same hallway he walks down every week. Room 351. He knocks and cards in.

She’s sitting at the edge of her bed against the wall, gazing out the bright window to her left. Thomas squints as his eyes slowly adjust. His mother turns her head to look at him and her eyes light up.

“Thomas?”

“Good morning, Mom.”

“Thomas, how are you?” She beams and holds her arms open to embrace him. He strides over and squeezes her.

“I’m doing okay. How are you doing?”

“Oh, Thomas, I’ve missed you,” she sniffles, holding his hand.

Thomas sighs but shows her a weak smile. “Mom, I saw you yesterday.”

“Did you?” Her round eyes widen. “Oh my. It feels like ages ago. But then it also feels like just yesterday when I would pick you up after school.”

“Does it?” he asks dryly.

“Yes, oh, what was the place we used to go often for dinner, Thomas?”

Thomas closes his eyes and tilts his head down, breathing out to release his frustration. He then raises his head with a false grin spread across his face.

“Tini’s Paninis!” he exclaims.

His mother squeals. “That’s right! Tini’s Paninis! You know what?”

“What.”

“I think there’s a Tini’s Paninis here! It’s at the food court. I’ll get one for you, dear. You must be starving.”

Thomas attempts to stop her. “No, Mom, it’s okay. I’m not hungry.”

His mother scoffs. “You’re always hungry, Thomas.”

It’s true.

“I’ll be back. I’ll get you something to eat. You must be starving. Turkey pesto on wheat... with what again?” she asks, holding her pale face.

“With sun-dried tomatoes,” he responds weakly.

She smiles. “Got it.”

“Mom?” He stops her as she’s shuffling toward the door. She turns around and the sun makes her glow. She’s almost sparkling.

“Yes, Thomas? I need to hurry to the shop before it—”

“Happy birthday. I love you.” He holds out a blue shawl he bought yesterday and drapes it over her shoulders.

“Oh, sweetie, I love you! Okay, you stay right here and I’ll be back with that panini in no time.”

She walks out of the door and leaves him in the room as usual. Thomas waits a minute then proceeds to the lobby to watch her through

the glass. She is already facing the white wall she always stands in front of, listening to and laughing at nothing. She laughs over and over. He sighs. It's her birthday. At least she's happy.

He watches Jack sit her down in the chair and wheel her into Social. She's doing a lot better today compared to yesterday. Thomas recalls the events and shudders. He focuses back on Social and sees she's playing cards with Alex and Katja. He catches them all laughing at something Alex said—even Katja is smiling.

Thomas leaves the window and waves to Patty on his way out.

"You know the drill," he tells her.

"You're coming back tonight too? Even though it's not Friday?"

He holds out his hands. "I gotta. It's her birthday."

After work, Thomas returns through the same doors he entered that morning. He breathes in the disinfectant smell, but somehow it's a bit more bearable at night. Patty greets him with a smile. He returns the smile and takes the key card she's holding out for him. Room 351.

His mother is sitting in her chair facing away from him, trembling as usual with her hands knotted close to her chest. He rotates her to face him. She studies his face in confusion. He looks at her intently.

"Lydia, this is your room. You're sleeping here tonight. No one's gonna attack you. You're safe here," Thomas tells her.

"Can you please take me to Tini's Paninis? I need the turkey pesto on—"

"—On wheat with sun-dried tomatoes. Yes, you can go tomorrow." He stares at her with a blank face and then turns to walk out.

"Sir?"

Thomas sighs. "Yes, Lydia?"

"Is today my birthday?" She points to her blue shawl.

Thomas' eyes widen and he smiles. "Why, yes, it is!"

She giggles. "Well, happy birthday to me. Goodnight, sir."

Thomas releases the door and lets it close slowly.

"Goodnight, Lydia. Happy birthday."



REITERATION XV - RIVULETS

CATHERINE SKINNER
oil paint



REMNANTS VI -
ACCUMULATIONS SERIES

CATHERINE SKINNER
oil paint

PURELY ANECDOTAL

When I was younger, I watched a woman's car stall on the tracks while a train was coming. I remember seeing her jump from the driver's seat, waving her arms in some desperate attempt to stop the train, then run, fleeing the impending crash. And just like the other spectators, I watched, waiting for the inevitable orchestra of sparks, wreckage, and screeching metal. But in a twist that felt like a cop-out, the train missed its mark by maybe a foot—the car was on the track adjacent. Then the railroad lights quit flashing, the safety bars lifted, and I drove away at the green light, only glancing at the woman still gasping for breath on the sidewalk as I sped by.

This anecdote wasn't meant to reveal anything, it's simply a story I pull out of my back pocket sometimes. I find anecdotes entertaining. They're a break in the plot, a sidebar, a tangent with an immediate wrap-up and pay-off. The Greeks described them as "things unpublished;" the Romans, during the Justinian era, referenced them as a "revelation of secrets." Because after all, anecdotes are just details, but the Devil is in the details. Hammering home meaning like Aesop's fables gives me a headache—infer your meaning through nuance, not everything has a point. Most of my anecdotes are just examples of the absurdism around me—what else do you want from them?

When I lived in Portland for two years for college, I met a guy studying psychology that begged to find meaning in every interaction. This was during my freshman year when my friend-group would drink six nights a week, drop acid, and tally the shots from whatever ten-dollar handle. The guy's name was Milo and he listened to *Songs About Jane* and thought I was edgy because I said, "Who cares?" a lot.

During a fourteen-person acid trip in a trap-house in Washington, I decided I was in love with him while he was smoking pot through an apple-bong. He liked to trace my jaw and lips with his finger whenever we were drunk on whatever Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. I could never figure out if this was a boy questioning his sexuality or just comfortable with his masculinity. I got my answer a semester later in the upstairs room of some house party, when he grabbed me and kissed me tasting like Green Apple Four Loko in the closest thing I'd get to a *Love, Simon* moment. The next weekend, he was kicked out of school for drugs and running from the police.

FOR PET ABANDONMENT

Just past the Nevada stateline,
 a warning: \$1000 fine for pet abandonment.
Owners on a road through nowhere,
 to our piss poor attempt to surpass
the decadent pinnacle of Rome's
 anything goes philosophy of leisure,
 listening to the Beegees. The radio
 kicks in the Beatles, they start to sing along,
dog smiling in the rushing wind,
 lips flap like half-mast flags.
 Black cat basks in the sun lamp
 of the back window—tail swishing.
 Some owners walk them out a ways
 across the hard sand and rock,
leash tied to a tree out of sight,
 others abandoned in cages to broil
 in the Death Valley oven
 just meters from the rush-rush-rush of SUV,
cries poured toward tire's hum until the whimpers cease.

I don't bother asking the "why" to things in my life anymore—it doesn't interest me. The characters that asked, "Why me?" in novels were always my least favorite. "Why not?" I always respond. My stories sound as if a wheel was spun with random names and verbs, and I must roll with the Mad-Libs. My time in Portland was like a two-year-long indie film shot with the lens of a fever dream and seasonal depression. It turned out my friends and I developed a reputation of being indestructible on that small campus. Our big group-chat was called "Puke & Rally" because we would celebrate Wine Wednesday with a religious fervor and still make the Dean's List. I liked my personality to be a compilation of multi-tasking tropes. I think Portland is weird, I don't think they've ever seen someone that can party and not be a burn-out. They've obviously never been to California.

While in Portland, I worked for the Student Senate and watched reality and fiction interlock and twine like a braid sliding down a Christian girl's back. People get a taste of fake power and forget how to behave. Senators would enter the lime-green office and reduce each other to tears over a fifty-dollar stipend increase—"annoying, stupid, inadequate, pear-shaped." When election season rolled around, a boy tried to bribe votes with promises of Everclear jungle juice. He threatened to sue the Elections Committee (with the backing of his NASA father) when he was disqualified. "Come to my office and say it to my face," read the email the Elections Chair sent back. She threw every single item on his office desk in the trash before heading to her five o'clock class with a large iced coffee.

In the middle of a particularly-intense drinking session, I received a phone call about a candidate that had to be hospitalized after having a mental break at a fancy dinner with the Political-Science department. She had stood on the twelve-person table and screamed about her boyfriend, the son of an unnamed Italian dictator succumbing to fascism, and also happened to mention she was Jesus. In the immediate aftermath, discussing the candidate, our advisor sat behind his desk piled with board-games, looking at a gaggle of hungover twenty-year-old students and asked, "Can't you all handle it?" before leaving for a meeting.

My conception of the social prerogative collapsed in on itself like a poorly-built house. Rules and expectations of how we were supposed to exist and interact felt as if they were thrown into a blender to make a discarded societal smoothie. Sensationalism and absurdism became the preferred mode of organization and I decided to just go with it. During my freshman year, there was a four-month-long period where no medical services were available on campus—a call to the med center resulted in advice on herbal

remedies and a “sorry ’bout it.” There was an outbreak of strep throat and I fell victim to forty-minute hot showers and bouts of delirium. When I showed signs of improving, my friends celebrated with absinthe and sub-par dining hall fries.

There was a boy named Aaron that I met in Portland whose antics were so strange that my friends and I still debate whether he was real or not. He was a rich kid from Marin who loved Xanax and not going to class—I don’t think I ever saw him not drunk or hungover. He desensitized me to absurdism. He once went on a Xanax bender from Thursday until Tuesday and couldn’t remember a thing in between. During this stint, my friend called me and told me that people thought Aaron might be OD’ing on a bed, and the only thing I bothered to ask was, “Is it your bed?” It wasn’t, but we decided that since he was still breathing, he was fine. We were indestructible, remember?

During our freshman year, Aaron was stabbed in the face by some Marin drug-dealer after he tried to steal a bag of molly. He won a million-dollar civil lawsuit and never once put sheets on his bed. He was kicked out of school with Milo. A couple of years later, I found out he was shot in his car somewhere in the Bay. Rest in peace, I guess.

Before Portland, I used to grasp for meaning like the claw of some arcade game. I walked circles in my backyard and threw over-ripe oranges at a brick wall from a tree older than my parents. This was at the same time two nurses and a doctor all told me I had high blood pressure only to conclude a few weeks later that maybe I “was just a neurotic person” and hung up before I could ask another question. It doesn’t surprise me—my neatly-organized *Edward Scissorhands* suburb tricked me into believing there was an order to things. My anecdotes have taught me to stop expecting organization.

One of my best friends from Portland who now works for Google tells me stories about two soccer players she lived with her freshman year. They were pretty and blonde and had the intelligence of a turtle. They would make two or three Irish Coffees in the morning as a way to start their day and then complain about headaches in the afternoon. They were shocked to find out Bailey’s Liqueur was alcoholic. One of them went through a *90210*-depression, waking up to watch eleven-hour marathons of the show from her lofted bed and then fall back asleep around midnight in a blanket of snack wrappers. Another woke up in the wrong bed with her entire torso stuffed inside a trash bin. Because they thought she was smart, both girls asked my Google friend if it was possible to give themselves an-

orexia because they “were looking to drop a few pounds.” One of the girls transferred to be in a sorority at another school and the other married rich and lives in Seattle. It all works out, unless a bullet gets in the way.

It seems my anecdotes are not meaningless because they’ve warped my worldview. I don’t believe events happen for a reason, but I know the effects have changed the way I behave. I think trauma makes you funnier, I find tears self-indulgent, when I see Heineken on sale, I send a thank you to a god I don’t bother believing in. My humor is like chucking oranges at a brick-wall and seeing what sticks. I roll with the punches, it hasn’t failed me yet.

It irritates me when experiences are too symbolic. I feel as if the universe is pandering, shoving something so obviously on-the-nose it could be aired on a network show. It reminds me of a night I was chased by a coyote while on a jog in suburbia. It got closer block by block and then didn’t flinch at my attempts to scare it away. I fear rabies and the embarrassment of an urgent care waiting room. I flagged down a passing car and asked the teenage driver to drop me off some blocks down the road. I hate how symbolic this is, but I can’t be angry: unlike fiction, reality has no obligation to appear believable.

I left Oregon for California and this past year has been so absurd that even my wild stories seem commonplace. I have deescalated situations from a lounging position with a sigh of, “You’re so boring.” I have done keg stands and watched girls do stripteases on beer-die tables only for them to collapse. I had accidentally taken too much Ecstasy and shamelessly flirted with the student volunteer handing out water. After two years, I have perfected the perfect gin and tonic and two drinks later, I become the deliverer of poignant truths.

When I get bored, I instigate my own absurdism. I wrote a three-hundred-page novel about my senior year in high school: a *Gossip Girl* exposé of personal proportions. My school was in Los Angeles and my senior year was packed with house parties, casual sex, and cheating couples. We were bad kids, but bad kids make the best content. Monogamy fell out of fashion that year for whatever reason, and people slept with one another as revenge tactics and as a way to pass the time. I slept with college boys at campuses nearby because I thought I was cool, and met pornstars while clubbing in West Hollywood. We were children of LA, kept informed by the steady-stream of evolving gossip. I sent a copy of the manuscript to every person it mentions. I’m currently seeking publication.

I have given up on trying to sound smart, I let the wave of colloquialisms and half-formed thoughts wash over me with pleasure. I hate when people my age try to be philosophic—it usually means they smoke too much weed or not enough. I’ve come to ask, “What does that even mean?” only to find hardly anyone knows what they’re saying. Words are released in an attempt to drain the alphabet soup in our heads. I toss my words into the air and hope they land. I throw my oranges and hope they stick.

I look for meaning in the actions and reactions and determine its value later. I wonder if anything is truly absurd if the world just runs that way. I’m letting the world shape me like a child’s erratic ceramics project. I don’t bother expecting organization anymore—it’s all just anecdotal, find your meaning elsewhere.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

volume 107 / issue 01

Huda Al-Marashi is the Iraqi-American author of *First Comes Marriage: My Not-So-Typical American Love Story*, a book the *Washington Post* called “a charming, funny, heartbreaking memoir of faith, family, and the journey to love. If Jane Austen had grown up as a first-gen daughter of Iraqi parents in the 1990s, she might have written this.” Excerpts from this memoir have also been anthologized in *Love Inshallah: The Secret Love Lives of Muslim American Women*, *Becoming: What Makes a Woman*, and *Beyond Belief: The Secret Lives of Women and Extreme Religion*. Her other writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *LA Times*, *alJazeera*, *VIDA Review*, the *Rumpus*, the *Offing* and elsewhere. She is the recipient of a Cuyahoga County Creative Workforce Fellowship and an Aspen Summer Words Emerging Writer Fellowship. *First Comes Marriage* was longlisted for the Chautauqua Prize and a finalist for the Southern California Independent Booksellers’ Award. Huda currently resides in California with her husband and three children.

Shawn Anto is from Delano, California. He’s originally from Kerala, India. He received his B.A. in English & Theatre at CSU Bakersfield. He currently lives in Harlem pursuing his MFA in Creative Writing at Columbia University. His writing has been featured or are forthcoming in *Reed Magazine*, *O:JA&L*, *Mojave Heart Review*, and elsewhere.

Stina Arstorp, originally from a small town in Connecticut, now a Junior at Santa Clara University is an Environmental Studies & Studio Arts Major. Influenced by the vibrant colors of her Northern California surroundings, her work is primarily focused on color and light that she finds in moments of her daily life.

Nefertiti Asanti is a poet and cultural worker from the Bronx. Nefertiti is a recipient of fellowships from The Watering Hole, Lambda Emerging Writer’s Retreat, and Anaphora Writing Residency. Nefertiti is a 2019 Winter Tangerine Fellow and is currently working on a chapbook entitled *the present is a small child*. Nefertiti’s work can be found at *Winter Tangerine*, *AfroPunk*, *Foglifter*, and elsewhere.

Melissa Ballete, Santa Clara University ’20, is a writer and Bay Area native who spends a lot of time staring up at the cosmos and finding ways to incorporate them into her writing. Her only other published poem, “a lesson on how to devastate properly,” was featured in *The Owl* in early 2019. She is a big fan of corgis and milk tea.

Kelci Baughman McDowell, also known as Kelci M. Kelci, is a librarian in the Archives & Special Collections department of the University Library at SCU. She holds an MLIS from San José State University and an MFA in Writing from the University of San Francisco. You can find her at www.kelcimkelci.com.

Mela Blust is a Pushcart and Best of the Net nominated poet, and has appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Burning House Press*, *Coffin Bell*, *Moonchild Magazine*, *Yes Poetry*, and many more. She is Head Publicist and Social Media Manager for Animal Heart Press, a contributing editor for *Barren Magazine*, and a poetry reader for *The Rise Up Review*. She can be followed at twitter.com/melablust.

Arno Bohlmeijer, MA English Lit, BA French, is a bilingual poet and novelist writing in English and Dutch, winner of the National Charlotte Köhler Grant, finalist for the 2018 Gabo Prize as well as the 2018 Poetry Matters Project, has been published in 5 countries (US, UK, Europe), and was starred by Publishers Weekly: “Relishing the subtle beauty of the author’s prose. Life-affirming.” You may visit his website at www.arnobohlmeijer.com.

Steve Briscoe lived in Oakland for many years, frequenting flea markets, looking for assemblage components for sculptural artwork. He started photographing the artless arrangements on the ground as a way of presenting a virtual assemblage. Cropping and isolating objects on their colored tarps and blankets, he found the collision of the kitsch and the mundane intriguing, like answers to unasked questions.

Lisa Compo is a student at Salisbury University on the Eastern Shore of Maryland where she studies creative writing and is currently chief editor for the campus magazine. She has work recently published in journals such as: *Natural Bridge*, *SLAB*, *The Shore Poetry*, and elsewhere. Recently, she was a semi-finalist for the 2019 Nimrod Journal Awards.

Gabriel Palacios lives and writes in Tucson, Arizona, and received an MFA in creative writing from the University of Arizona. His work may be read in *Contra Viento*, *West Branch*, *The Volta*, *Territory*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Typo Magazine*, *Bayou Magazine*, and other journals.

Tongo Eisen-Martin was born in San Francisco and earned his MA at Columbia University. He is the author of *someone’s dead already* (Bootstrap Press, 2015), nominated for a California Book Award; and *Heaven Is All Goodbyes* (City Lights, 2017), which received a 2018 American Book Award, a 2018 California Book Award, was named a 2018 National California Booksellers Association Poetry Book of the Year, and was shortlisted for the 2018 Griffin International Poetry Prize. In their citation, the judges for the Griffin Prize wrote that Eisen-Martin’s work “moves between trenchant political critique and dreamlike association, demonstrating how, in the right hands, one mode might energize the other—keeping alternative orders of meaning alive in the face of radical injustice.... His poems are places where discourses and vernaculars collide and recombine into new configurations capable of expressing outrage and sorrow and love.”

Eisen-Martin is also an educator and organizer whose work centers on issues of mass incarceration, extrajudicial killings of Black people, and human rights. He has taught at detention centers around the country and at the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University. He lives in San Francisco.

Piotr Florczyk is a translingual poet, essayist, and translator of Polish poetry. His most recent books are poetry volumes *Dwa tysiące słów* and *East & West*, and several volumes of translations, including *Building the Barricade* by Anna Świrszczyńska, which won the 2017 Found in Translation Award and the 2017 Harold Morton Landon Translation Award from the Academy of American Poets.

Aerik Francis is a Queer Black Latinx poet and educator based in Denver, Colorado. He is most recently a Winter Tangerine Workshop alum and the 2019 Amiri Baraka Scholar for SWP at Naropa University. Find his work in *SpitPoet Zine*, *TSPJ*, and *Borderlands: Texas Review*.

Jenna Glover is an aspiring novelist and native Californian. She received her B.A. in English (Creative Writing) from San Jose State University and currently works as an English teacher and freelance writer. In her spare time, she is reading her way through the library's sci-fi/fantasy section. Her work has appeared in multiple cycles of *F(r)iction's* Dually Noted contests.

Tony Gruenewald is the author of *The Secret History of New Jersey* (Northwind) and his work has been seen in *The New York Times*, *Tiferet*, *English Journal*, *Edison Literary Review*, and many other publications. He works as an archivist for major media organizations. For more visit tonygruenewald.com.

In addition to her collaborations with David Wolfersberger, folklorist **Madronna Holden's** poems have appeared in the anthology, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, as well as in *American Writing*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Equinox Prose and Poetry*, *Windfall*, the *Clackamas Literary Review*, and many others.

Zebulon Huset is a teacher, writer and photographer living in San Diego. His writing has recently appeared in *The Southern Review*, *Louisville Review*, *Fence*, *Rosebud*, *Meridian*, *North American Review*, *Cortland Review*, *Portland Review*, *Maine Review*, *Texas Review* and *Fjords Review* among others. He publishes a writing prompt blog Notebooking Daily with its print companion Notebooking Periodically and is the editor of the fledgling journal *Coastal Shelf*.

Sarah James has dreamt of being a writer for as long as she can remember. She is an English and Communication double major with a Creative Writing

minor at Santa Clara University. Sarah writes poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, and loves a smooth cappuccino and a walk in the morning.

Sylvia Jones lives in Baltimore, Maryland with her girlfriend Agata and their buff tabby, Theo. She is currently an MFA candidate at American University in Washington D.C. where she serves as a poetry reader for FOLIO. She is eternally iffy about social media and internet culture.

Vladimir Kush Kush predominantly works in the medium of oil painting on canvas or board, with many of the original paintings also sold as limited edition giclée-on-canvas prints. His bronze-colored sculptures are small-scale and usually based on imagery from his paintings, such as *Walnut of Eden* and *Pros and Cons*. Although his style is frequently described as surrealist, Kush himself refers to it as “metaphorical realism” and cites the early influence on his style of Salvador Dalí’s surrealist paintings as well as landscapes by the German romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. Another influence on his work has been the 16th century Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, known for his fantastic imagery and sometimes characterised as “the pre-Surrealism Surrealist.” Wings, ships, and color-saturated seascapes are frequent themes in his paintings, exemplified in the companion pieces, *Arrival of the Flower Ship* and *Departure of the Winged Ship*. Flowing water is another recurrent theme, exemplified by *Breach* and *Current*. Other works such as *Three Graces* and *African Sonata* merge human and animal forms with inanimate objects.

Annie Ma is a high school senior from San Jose, where she is a co-editor-in-chief of her school’s literary magazine, *HELM*. She also dabbles in photography, and has a gallery at www.anniemma.co.

Harrison Pyros is an Economics and English student from UC Santa Barbara. His fiction and social commentary has appeared in *The Catalyst* and *University of Portland’s Writers magazine*. He sincerely believes he will never leave California. His debut novel is currently being considered for publication and his short work can be found at harrisonpyros.com.

Ira Rosenstein has recently been published in *California Quarterly* and *Plainsongs*. He is a radio producer in New York City. “Nobody Sees My Horns—A Dream” is part of *Love And Death*, 57 poems and poem/screenplays in 329 pages.

David Sapp, writer, artist and professor, lives along the southern shore of Lake Erie in North America. A Pushcart nominee, his poems appear widely in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. His publications also include chapbooks *Close to Home* and *Two Buddha* and a novel, *Flying Over Erie*.

Taylor Schaefer is a student at Salisbury University and Fiction Editor on their literary magazine *The Scarab*. She is a lover of poetry, and tries to make work that either pulls and pulls at something deep inside or hands out black eyes like candy. Her previous works have also appeared in *Poetry South*, *Stonecoast Review*, *The Shore* and *Polaris Literary Magazine*.

John Sibley Williams is the author of *As One Fire Consumes Another* (Orison Poetry Prize, 2019), *Skin Memory* (Backwaters Prize, University of Nebraska Press, 2019), *Disinheritance*, and *Controlled Hallucinations*. A twenty one-time Pushcart nominee, John is the winner of numerous awards, including the Wabash Prize for Poetry, Philip Booth Award, and Laux/Millar Prize. He serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review*.

Chloe Scheuch is a senior at Santa Clara University from Long Island, New York. She is double majoring in English and Studio Art with a minor in Creative Writing. Chloe won the McCann Short Story prize for a collection she wrote her sophomore year of college. This will be her first poetry publication to date.

Catherine Skinner's *Accumulations* is a series of exploration. My mind stays open to experimentation and listening to early morning dreams. Stacking, gathering, collecting, assembling, amassing, mounding... all words speaking to accumulations. Vertical stacking relates to our heart rhythms and the earth's seismic movements recorded on monitor printouts. Delicate tracery to heavy incising echo the basic elements of our natural systems. The patterns are what I see out of the corner of my eye, beneath my footsteps to distant views.

Bonnie Smith is nursing student at Illinois Wesleyan University. When she is not in a hospital or a lab, she is either reading or writing poetry.

Drawing is fundamental to **Nicole Spencer's** work. She tries to retain the quality of initial rough sketches by being careful not to over refine work.

Matthew J. Spireng's book *What Focus Is* was published by WordTech Communications. His book *Out of Body* won the 2004 Bluestem Poetry Award and was published by Bluestem Press. He won *The MacGuffin's* 23rd Annual Poet Hunt in 2018, judged by Alberto Rios, and is an eight-time Pushcart Prize nominee.

Adriana Stimola is a non-fiction literary agent, content consultant, mother and ever-aspiring poet. Her poetry has most recently been published by the *Santa Clara Review*, *High Shelf Press* and *Tiny Seed Literary Journal*. She lives in the Hudson Valley of New York.

Alexandra Strokina is passionate about traveling, exploring, hiking, admiring nature, enjoying mountains, but most of all painting. She fell in love

with Scandinavian beauty and has been inspired by Norwegian landscape and culture. She paints while travelling, nature being her main inspiration. Some of her paintings are in Norway, some of them are in Russia.

As a Black man from Detroit, the road is already lined with hazards. **Andre Sykes** decided to write poetry in order to pave a different road. That road led him to study poetry in college and learn the rules before he shattered them. He currently resides in Detroit, MI, where he is writing his debut book of poetry entitled “Chlorine Trenches.”

Erica Trabold is the author of *Five Plots* (Seneca Review Books, 2018), winner of the inaugural Deborah Tall Lyric Essay Book Prize and a 2019 Nebraska Book Award. Her work appears in *Brevity*, *Literary Hub*, *The Rumpus*, *Passages North*, *The Collagist*, *Essay Daily*, and elsewhere. She is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Sweet Briar College in central Virginia.

David Wolfersberger and his paintings are summer friends, sometimes seen walking the land as they feel and remember it and want it to be again, before fences, where people live and care for the earth and each other. His artwork has appeared or is forthcoming in *Cold Mountain Review*, *About Place*, *Leaping Clear*, the *Slippery Elm Literary Review*, and *Puerto del Sol*, among others.

Kyla Yamashita is an alumna of Santa Clara University with a Bachelor of Science degree in both Biology and Public Health Science as well as a minor in Creative Writing. In her free time, she enjoys singing, dancing, and playing the piano. She's grateful she has the opportunity to share her creative work after college!

Isaac Yelder is an English major in his third year at Santa Clara University who grew up in both Detroit and Phoenix. He loves Tiger Woods and the Detroit Pistons, and has yet to find anybody who can compete with him in Mario Kart. His life is heavily influenced by rap, from 90s west coast to modern mixtapes published on Datpiff.

SANTA CLARA REVIEW

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION

\$15

TWO YEAR SUBSCRIPTION

\$25

INDIVIDUAL ISSUES AND BACKORDERS

\$7.50

SUBSCRIBE AT:

SANTACLARAREVIEW.COM

SINCE

1869

ISBN 2325-2782



9772325 278006

05



SANTA CLARA REVIEW

volume 107 / issue 01

CONTRIBUTORS

HUDA AL-MARASHI / SHAWN ANTO / STINA ARSTORP / NEFERTITI ASANTI / MELISSA BALLETE
/ KELCI BAUGHMAN McDOWELL / MELA BLUST / ARNO BOHLMEIJER / STEVE BRISCOE / LISA
COMPO / GABRIEL PALACIOS / TONGO EISEN-MARTIN / PIOTR FLORCZYK / AERIK FRANCIS /
JENNA GLOVER / TONY GRUENEWALD / MADRONNA HOLDEN / ZEBULON HUSET / SARAH JAMES /
SYLVIA JONES / VLADIMIR KUSH / ANNIE MA / HARRISON PYROS / IRA ROSENSTEIN / DAVID SAPP
/ TAYLOR SCHAEFER / JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS / CHLOE SCHEUCH / CATHERINE SKINNER / BONNIE
SMITH / NICOLE SPENCER / MATTHEW J. SPIRENG / ADRIANA STIMOLA / ALEXANDRA STROKINA /
ANDRE SYKES / ERICA TRABOLD / DAVID WOLFERSBERGER / KYLA YAMASHITA / ISAAC YELDER